Chessie

The Railroad Kitten

by Thomas W. Dixon, Jr.

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TLC Publishing, Inc.
Lynchburg, Virginia

Chessie, The Railroad Kitten

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INTRODUCTION

The Chesapeake & Ohio Railway and Chessie, our famous railroad kitten, have been synonymous since long before I went to work for the C&O in 1949. Over the years, it has been an honor and a privilege for me to be associated with some of the finest people in railroading — and I must say that the continuing spirit of Chessie has added deeper meaning to the experience of running the C&O and the other great railroads that now make up CSX Transportation.

For the last several years, I also have had the privilege of knowing Tom Dixon, a dedicated railroad historian who has done a remarkable job of organizing the C&O Historical Society for the preservation and active use of C&O items for future historians. The Society has shown continuing progress in establishing the official C&O archives at a site in Clifton Forge, Va., and we at CSX are pleased to be able to support the project financially and to have contributed our archives and to other worthwhile Society undertakings for some time now.

We former employees of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway have a lot of memories of a great company that meant not only our livelihoods, but so many more intangible things for so many years. I'm certain that I speak for those men and women when I say we are delighted to have such an entity as the C&O Historical Society to allow others to share in what we had — and what we will have for the rest of our lives.

In the meantime, I hope you will enjoy as much as I have Tom's retelling of the fabulous story of our C&O Chessie, the kitten that won over a nation in war and peace and remains so important to us today.

Hays T. Watkins
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
CSX Corporation
Richmond, Virginia
September 1, 1988

FOREWORD

Chessie.

Seems I've heard about that cat all my life.

You, too?

Somehow she was always there, like Uncle Sam and Savings Bonds and all those symbols and things that are patriotic, part of your childhood and easily recalled. Not that I went out of my way to notice Chessie, because, after all, my Dad was signal supervisor for the Virginian and Norfolk & Western railways in Princeton, W. Va., and Chessie represented the third coal-hauling Pocahontas Region railroad...the competition...the Chesapeake & Ohio.

Why, the only time I would ever would have occasion to notice little Chessie was during those infrequent 30-mile automobile excursions to the depot at Hinton to meet friends and relatives on the C&O's passenger trains. But somehow the wonderful image of Chessie and the good things she represented stuck with me.

Years later, I had the privilege of working for the Chessie System Railroads in Cleveland from 1979-86 as the last principal spokesman for Chessie and her railroads, a position that I cannot resist calling "the cat's meow."

But then I realized why Chessie had been part of the American consciousness for so long. High in the Terminal Tower overlooking the once-omnipotent industrial complex of America, I could sense the power and creativity that had been there for many years.

These men who were my colleagues in the Chessie Public Relations & Advertising Department had carried on the Chessie tradition year after year with their advertising, calendars, press releases and novelty items of all descriptions: Milt Dolinger, George McCann, Franklyn Carr, Tom Johnson, Willis Cook, Vera LeClerq, Richard Harris and Ben Price. They followed those I had not been able to work with, among them Howard Skidmore, Sharon D. Lee, Ed Long, Tom Deegan, Walter Jackson and right back to L. C. Probert himself.

These were the people who, with the permission of their respective C&O presidents, made Chessie happen for all of us. Let's not forget, of course, that they were so successful in their attempts to make a cute little kitten the official symbol of a big brawny railroad, that in 1972 they convinced the writer of the Introduction to this history, now CSX Corporation President and CEO Hays T. Watkins, to rename the entire railroad after her!

The salad days of Chessie in Cleveland are clearly history. Today, we at CSX Transportation are working hard to create the premier international transportation company. And, with a worldwide shipping company, and barge and truck lines, we believe we are doing just that.

But right now, we pause in this new world of change and real challenge to let the best C&O historian, Thomas W. Dixon Jr., do for Chessie and for us what no one has ever done: put her story all together in one place — and see what her future is.

Thanks, Tom, for all your effort. And thanks, Chessie, for a singular privilege of employment.

Lloyd D. Lewis
Director, News & Media Relations
CSX Transportation
Jacksonville, Florida
September 1, 1988
(Chessie's 55th Birthday)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to many, many friends for their help in supplying information, doing research, finding photographs, and giving such fine encouragement and moral support to me in this project.

The files of the Chesapeake & Ohio Historical Society, Inc., of which I am founder and president, have been the basic research tools used in compiling this book. Those files are available to anyone by contacting the Society at its archives address (P. O. Box 79, Clifton Forge, VA 24422) where membership information can also be obtained. Most of this material has been given to the Society through the wonderful support of the top management of Chessie System Railroads, later CSX Corporation, and particularly Hays T. Watkins, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, who has written an introduction to this book. His encouragement and the financial support that the company has given the Society, as well as the donation of archival material over a number of years, have been responsible in large measure for the tremendous success of the Society. Although this book isn't a Society project, without the Society and its materials and without the CSX support in giving us these materials this story would have been lost in the mists of time.

Always with the possibility of leaving someone out, here's a list of those who have given unselfishly of their time and knowledge to help make this the complete and accurate story of Chessie. They all have my unreserved thanks: Hays T. Watkins, Howard Skidmore, Milton B. Dolinger, William F. Howes, Jr., Joseph R. Beckman, Thomas E. Hoppin, Lloyd D. Lewis, and John B. Corns, all present or past officers of CSX Corporation or Chessie System Railroads; Tod Hanger, Randolph Kean, and, of course, my wonderful wife, Carolyn, who taught me about real cats and has brought me to as great an appreciation of them as I have long had for the fictional Chessie, and who has given me the love and companionship that has made my life complete.

Thomas W. Dixon, Jr.
Sterling, Virginia
September 1, 1988

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CHESSIE

THE RAILROAD KITTEN

BY THOMAS W. DIXON, JR.

CHAPTER 1

IN THE BEGINNING

Peeking out from beneath her Pullman blanket, Chessie is one lady whose colorful past has endeared her and the railroad she represented to millions of people around the world for more than half a century. Chosen by the brawny, coal-hauling Chesapeake & Ohio to be its symbol of "purr-fect transportation," Chessie had to prove herself worthy of the honor — and that she did.

In grand style she posed for calendars and railroad memorabilia; she sacrificed with the rest of America during World War II; and, like a true railroader, she rode the freight trains along with the luxury coaches to prove her mettle.

Maybe the Great Northern had the rambunctious Rocky Mountain billy goat, the Pennsylvania ("Standard Railroad of the World") had its staid and formal keystone, and the Norfolk Southern now has the charging, rearing thoroughbred stallion, but no railroad symbol before, or since, has captured the fame of Chesapeake & Ohio's Chessie.

Chronicled on these pages is the story of how Chessie came to the C&O Railway and how she became synonymous with railroading even after the Pullman berths she first advertised were but a memory in the collective mind of America. How even today, with her official duties retired, she continues to live on in the hearts and memories of her loyal fans and the annals of corporate tradition at CSX Transportation.

Children of her many followers may never have the opportunity to ride a train; and many never will know that a railway named C&O once carried great passenger trains from Washington to Cincinnati, but they will know of Chessie — this is her legacy.

Our story most properly begins with a sketch of the railway that Chessie came to represent, the Chesapeake & Ohio. The first predecessor of C&O was the Louisa Railroad. Starting in 1836, it was built in the rich farming land of Louisa County in central Virginia. After ten years as a virtual branch line of the

Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac Railroad, control of the Louisa was taken by its owners who began independent operations. Against fierce opposition from the RF&P, they extended their own line east to Richmond while building west to Charlottesville by 1850. They also changed their company's name to Virginia Central, representing much higher aspirations. After getting financial help from the Commonwealth of Virginia to construct a line across the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Virginia Central built to the foot of the Appalachians at what is now Clifton Forge, Va., and by 1860 was ready to vault the last mountain barrier to connect with the commerce of the "Great West."

This idea of a "smooth road" east to west across Virginia was originally a dream of George Washington and his contemporaries He was actually the first president of the James River & Kanawha Company, which was chartered to dig a canal westward to connect the navigable rivers of the Mississippi system with the James River and Tidewater Virginia.[1]

The Commonwealth again assisted by chartering the Covington & Ohio Railroad to build across the mountains and down to the Ohio; but the Civil War stopped work and wrecked most of the Virginia Central because it straddled many battlefields and was a vital logistical link for the Confederacy.

After the war the Virginians looked north to New York for capital in order to expand to the west. They found famed entrepreneur Collis P. Huntington, one of the "Big Four" builders of the Central Pacific side of the first transcontinental railroad (which also included the Union Pacific). Huntington was galvanized into action by the new business prospect and pushed the Covington & Ohio across the mountains and into the new state of West Virginia. At about the same time his western lines were meeting the eastern portion of the transcontinental railroad at their famous rendezvous at Promontory Point, Utah, in 1869.

By 1873 the newly named Chesapeake & Ohio had reached the Ohio River at Huntington, W.Va., named for the builder. Huntington, the man, continued to amass more and more railroads in his empire. By 1888 he had connected the C&O with a true transcontinental line via the Southern Pacific and other roads he owned. He began building westward along the Ohio River's south bank; and soon after his presidency ended in 1889, the C&O entered Cincinnati, which became its main western terminal. The C&O then spent the next 30 years building branches and tapping the fabulously rich coal territory it crossed through southern West Virginia and eastern Kentucky.

In 1910 C&O acquired the Hocking Valley Railway in Ohio and merged it in 1930, thereby gaining an outlet for its on-line coal to the booming industrial Midwest. C&O also acquired a Chicago line through Indiana in 1910; and the result was a true regional coal and merchandise carrier. C&O then became the cornerstone of another great railroad combination assembled by the brothers O. P. and M. J. Van Sweringen of Cleveland in the 1920s.

Because of its high reliance on coal, its superbly maintained physical plant, and its full treasury, the C&O weathered the Great Depression well, while other lines failed; and it was ready for yeoman service during World War II.

After the war, under the guidance of Robert R. Young, who was known as the "gadfly of the railroads," the line adopted the famous "C&O for Progress" slogan and image and was in the forefront of railroads looking to the future of that mode of transportation. C&O merged its subsidiary Pere Marquette Railway of Michigan and Ontario in 1947. In 1963 it acquired stock control of the venerable Baltimore & Ohio Railroad; C&O ran it and the associated Western Maryland Railway as an integrated system which was ultimately named Chessie System in 1972.

To meet increasingly sharp competition from home and the world market abroad, a parent company named CSX Corporation was formed in 1980 from the merger of Chessie System Railroads and Seaboard Coast Line Industries — an assemblage of the former Seaboard Air Line, Atlantic Coast Line, Louisville & Nashville, Clinchfield, Georgia, and West Point Route railroads, among others. Then, on Sept. 2, 1987, the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway, as a separate company, was merged out of existence into successor CSX Transportation, a 22,000-route-mile railroad (second only to Burlington Northern in length). Other CSX Corporation units serve the river barge line, pipeline and worldwide containership areas.

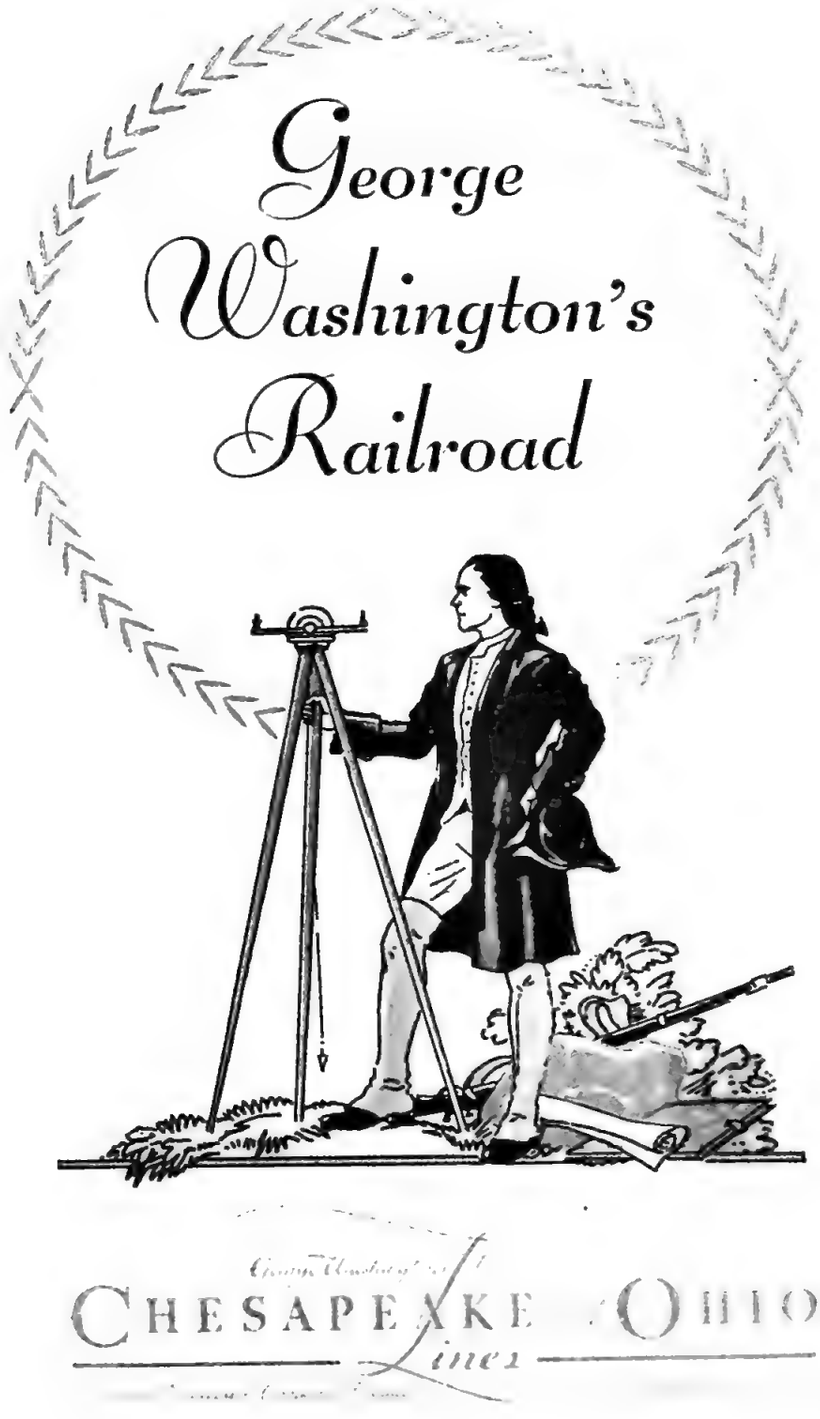
Our story of Chessie begins with a look at the man who brought her to the C&O Railway, Lionel C. Probert (known simply as "L. C." or "Dick"). At the time he discovered and adopted Chessie, Probert was assistant to C&O President J. J. Bernet. Probert is one of the C&O's most interesting characters. He is one about whom few people have ever heard, either during his lifetime or afterward, although his influence on the C&O's modern image is among the most profound of any one person.

Probert was born in Batavia, New York, on March 18, 1883, and as a young man went to work for the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railway, first as a day laborer and later as a locomotive fireman. During this period, he met fellow railroader J. J. Bernet and they developed a fast friendship that would greatly influence both men's future lives. In 1900 Probert left railroading for newspaper work as a reporter for the Buffalo, N. Y., *Express* and was a witness to President McKinley's assassination in that city in 1901.

Four years later Probert joined the Associated Press, first in New York City and later in Washington, D.C., covering the Justice and Treasury departments and then becoming AP news editor there in 1913. The next year he headed the AP staff in Mexico during the occupation

L. C. Probert, C&O's Vice President who discovered the Chessie etching and conceived the idea of "Sleep Like a Kitten" advertising.

C&O President J. J. Bernet, under whose guidance L. C. Probert undertook new and innovative advertising schemes.



above: This image of George Washington with surveying instruments was often used by the C&O in advertising its route as a direct descendent of the first President's original explorations and concept of the "Great Connections."

left: Walter C. Jackson, long-time C&O advertising manager, helped popularize Chessie and was a real source of continuity from the original idea to its later refinements.

of Vera Cruz. In 1917 Probert made one of the greatest "scoops" of the era when President Wilson phoned him and gave him for publication the text of the "Zimmerman Telegram," which helped to bring American public opinion to the brink of war with Germany.

After his Zimmerman coup, he became the AP Washington bureau chief and for the next few years wrote many major news stories about American participation in World War I. Few men before him had written of such important events to so large an audience, yet his byline never appeared on the stories, which were simply headed "AP."

He reorganized the AP's method for newsgathering at presidential nominating conventions by introducing a central clearing desk for all news, thus ensuring speed and accuracy of reporting. He was one of the few newspapermen who refused to concede the 1916 election to Hughes, and he was proven right.

Probert accompanied President Wilson to Paris after the war and reported on the peace conference. He became a good friend of the President and also his personal doctor, Admiral Cary T. Grayson. When Wilson left office, he gave Probert the flock of sheep that had grazed on the White House lawn during the war so caretakers could be released for Army service. Probert kept the sheep on his farm for many years and had their wool made into blankets for friends.

Already a legend in the newspaper world by 1927, Probert gave up this career and returned to railroading at the request of his good friend J. J. Bernet, who was by then president of the Erie Railroad. Probert became "special representative" of the president and was later made a vice president. When Bernet left the Erie to become president of both the C&O and Pere Marquette railroads — the Erie, C&O and PM were all then owned by the Van Sweringens of Cleveland and had interlocking officers — Probert followed as a PM vice president and assistant to the president and later VP of C&O in charge of real estate, industrial development and public relations. His work for both roads consisted of public relations (although that phrase hadn't yet become commonly used), advertising, and promotional programs mostly to do with passenger service, all duties for which he was well qualified.

From Probert's fertile mind came the idea for a new passenger route running from Pere Marquette's resort areas in Michigan to C&O's resort areas in Virginia, the result being inauguration of *The Sportsman* passenger service. He also conceived a new train of extra luxury, to run on an expedited schedule over the C&O main line, which he decided should be called *The George Washington* and which would be placed in operation on the 200th anniversary of the first president's birth.

Probert used as justification for the new train's name the connection of C&O with the old James River & Kanawha Canal to link the railway with the great general. He coined the phrase "George Washington's Railroad" to describe C&O and structured all the line's advertising and promotion around a colonial theme. New stations were built using Georgian architectural design; and *The George Washington* itself was replete with colonial furniture, paintings, and place names for its cars.

Most astonishing was the fact that all this was done in the worst days of the Great Depression, a time when American railroads generally had lost 50 percent of their business. However, C&O's solid base in coal transportation allowed it to more easily weather the economic storm while amazing the rest of the rail industry with its passenger innovations, all engendered by Probert.

---

[1]George Washington, one of the greatest proponents of the "Great Connection" between Virginia's Tidewater and the western portions of the continent, said:

> It is necessary to apply the cement of interest to bind all parts of the Union together with indissoluble bonds.... Settlers have no means of coming to us except by unimproved roads...but smooth the road and make easy the way and see how amazingly our exports will be increased and how amply we shall be compensated for the expense of effecting it. (The canal company's successor railroad was ultimately absorbed by the C&O, and its intended route was followed by the C&O to the Ohio River.)

CHAPTER 2

ENTER CHESSIE

For all his brilliant passenger service innovations and public relations work, it was almost by accident that L. C. Probert came to develop the most lasting image of all — Chessie. In early 1933 he was formulating a new advertising campaign and looking for a slogan and symbol that would convey to the public the smooth, relaxing, air-conditioned ride that C&O was offering its passengers. He had settled on the slogan "Sleep Like a Top" to replace "It's Always Springtime on the C&O" that had been appearing in recent timetables and advertisements.

While browsing through the magazine section of the New York *Herald Tribune,* Probert saw a reproduction of an etching depicting a small kitten tucked between the sheets, her paw thrust contentedly forward and one eye just barely open **(Figure 1)**. The illustration was used with an article on kindness to animals. Probert immediately fell in love with the etching and sought out its source. Walter Jackson, Probert's assistant (and later successor), remembered him coming out of the office in Cleveland holding the Sunday section of the paper with the cat reproduction and asking, "Which is better? 'Sleep Like a Top' or 'Sleep Like a Kitten'?"

The etching had been created by Guido Gruenewald, an artist living in Vienna, who used cats and kittens as favorite subjects for etchings. Gruenewald was born in Trieste (then a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) in 1881 and showed artistic talent early in life. He was enrolled in the Academy of Fine Arts when his family moved to the Austrian capital.

Throughout his young adulthood, he had financial problems and never could work on his art full time. But when he did, he often used copperplate etching as his medium for portraying mostly animal subjects and especially cats. He died in 1935, never having known that one of those hundreds of etchings would make him famous, not in the art world, but in the railroad and advertising worlds.

Gruenewald sold the particular etching that caught Probert's fancy to the Robertson-Deschamps Gallery in New York. He had entitled it "The Sleeping Cat" and it had come to New York from Vienna in a large shipment of his cat studies. Probert reportedly paid $5 for a

Figure 1 The classic original Chessie pose

Figure 2 1934 ad: "It's Always Springtime on the C&O"

THE
GEORGE
WASHINGTON
World's First Long Distance
AIR-COOLED TRAIN
First Air-Cooled
SLEEPING CARS
Clean, fresh, circulating air in every car—no drafts, dust or dirt. Beautiful Colonial interiors—many conveniences entirely new to railroad travel. The Most Wonderful Train in the World.
CHESAPEAKE and OHIO

Sleep like a Kitten
The George Washington • The Sportsman • The F. F. V.
The Finest Fleet of Air Conditioned Trains in the World
Serving WASHINGTON • PHILADELPHIA • NEW YORK • CINCINNATI • LEXINGTON • LOUISVILLE
CHICAGO • DETROIT • TOLEDO • CLEVELAND • ST. LOUIS • INDIANAPOLIS • COLUMBUS
RICHMOND • NORFOLK • NEWPORT NEWS • HOT SPRINGS • WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS

Figure 3 (left) 1932 ad for *The George Washington*

Figure 4 (above) "Sleep Like a Kitten" ad in Dec. 17, 1933, timetable

copy of the work. Early usages of the Chessie kitten show a copyright in the name of the Robertson-Deschamps Gallery.

The railroad officer took the print back to his office in Terminal Tower in downtown Cleveland, headquarters for all Van Sweringen railroads. He immediately brought it to the attention of Robert Diserens, vice president of the Campbell-Ewald Company of New York City, who was in charge of C&O's advertising program at that time. The firm of Campbell-Ewald had been employed to advertise the new *Sportsman* passenger train in 1930. It was an innovative firm, conceiving the idea of letting a Detroit radio audience listen to *The Sportsman's* departure from the station. So pleased was Probert with this approach and its success that he retained Campbell-Ewald for all C&O and Pere Marquette advertising.

In 1931 the agency began its "Fresh as a Daisy" passenger service campaign, using an appealing child with a big bouquet **(Figure 2)**. This was a radical departure from the drab and generally unimaginative ads then used to promote passenger trains. Almost at once C&O became known as a passenger railroad, even though it had only three main-line name trains, and passenger revenues represented a tiny fraction of its overall income from transportation of coal and general merchandise.

Campbell-Ewald again helped Probert with the introduction of *The George Washington* in 1932 and in making the public aware of what "air-conditioning" really meant for the passenger **(Figure 3)**. There was considerable confusion on this because other lines in the period had been using a number of make-shift cooling devices that weren't really as effective as what became known as air conditioning. As a result of the efforts of Probert and Campbell-Ewald, *The George Washington* soon rivaled the New York Central's New York-to-Chicago *Twentieth Century Limited* as the best known train in America.This was public relations at its best at the very dawn of the age of advertising as we know it today.

By August 1933 C&O had placed in service enough air-conditioned Pullmans, coaches and diners that it could say all three of its name trains were truly up-to-the-minute in comfort and convenience. The addition of *The Sportsman* and *The Fast Flying Virginian* to the C&O's air-conditioned fleet caused Probert and Diserens to look for a new promotional campaign to attract attention to this improvement. The sleeping cat seemed like a good idea and the first ad featuring her appeared in the September 1933 issue of *Fortune* magazine, in which the C&O often advertised to attract business travelers. Within two days of the ad's appearance, the railway's offices received more than 300

Sleep like a Kitten
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON • THE SPORTSMAN • THE F. F. V.
The Finest Fleet of Air-conditioned Trains in the World
CHESAPEAKE and OHIO

Figure 5 "Sleep Like a Kitten" ad in March 1934 *The Rail*

Sleep like a Kitten
AND ARRIVE Fresh as a Daisy
ON GEORGE WASHINGTON'S RAILROAD
"Better Transportation between East and West"
CHESAPEAKE and OHIO
Lines

Figure 6 "Sleep Like a Kitten and Arrive Fresh as a Daisy" ad from November 1935 *The Rail*

requests for reprints; and it was evident that Probert's idea was a sound one on which to base a future campaign. The kitten showed up in the Dec. 17, 1933, issue of the line's system passenger timetable in the same layout as had appeared in Fortune, advertising "Sleep Like a Kitten on the Finest Fleet of Air-Conditioned Trains in the World" **(Figure 4)**. From that time forward, few C&O public timetables failed to display somewhere the likeness of the kitten through to the very end of railroad passenger service on Amtrak day, May 1, 1971.

A report prepared by the Campbell-Ewald agency for C&O in 1937 states:

> Frankly, the response of this advertisement surprised us as much as anyone. Scarcely had the magazine been off the press —in fact, copies were not entirely distributed — when requests for reprints started pouring into our office. So fast did they come in that, rather than reprint the advertisement, we suggested that Chesapeake & Ohio utilize the etching on its annual calendar.... Thus, at the close of the year, Chesapeake & Ohio had hit an advertising jack-pot which has continued ever since.

In 1934, it was our agency's recommendation that Chesapeake & Ohio build an advertising campaign around Chessie to capitalize on her popularity. We clearly realized that Chessie was the best advertisement that Chesapeake & Ohio or any railroad ever had. But capable man as he was, Mr. Probert did not realize what a tremendous hit Chessie had made. He was afraid that the public would pronounce the name we had coined — Chessie — to rhyme with cheese. Up to that time the sleeping kitten had had no name whatsoever.

C&O printed 40,000 of the calendars featuring Chessie for the year 1934 and the demand far exceeded the supply, again indicating that Chessie was a PR bonanza. In order to protect its kitten, the railroad purchased exclusive rights from Robertson-Deschamps Gallery in December 1933, and then Chessie really was a member of the C&O family.

The original Chessie ad (still without a name) appeared in the next four issues of the C&O public timetable folder, but then disappeared with the July 10, 1934, issue, not to reappear until the Jan. 1, 1935, edition.

"Porter!! . . ."
Travel C and O and Sleep Like a Kitten
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON
THE SPORTSMAN · THE F. F. V.
The Finest Fleet of Air-Conditioned Trains in the World
CHESAPEAKE and OHIO

Figure 7 "Porter!!...." ad

Acknowledgments to

"CHESSIE"

the Chesapeake and Ohio kitten

A year ago we found you, a lonely little kitten looking for a home. You found one, and we found a friend. ~ ~ When we published your picture, a lot of folks said "Who ever heard of using a gol darned cat to advertise a railroad!" ~ But you told 'em, Chessie! Kids wouldn't go to bed unless you were near. Families called on us to settle dinner table arguments over whether that was your tail or your paw on the pillow. Overnight, you became The Kitten of the Hour. ~ ~ But more than that, Chessie, you suggested as no array of high-pressure language could do, the supreme comfort of Chesapeake and Ohio's genuinely air-conditioned trains. The sight of you, on The George Washington, snuggled drowsily down for the night under the soft, clean, cool linen made travelers want to come and try it. And they still are coming, and bringing their friends with them. ~ ~ And for all of that, Chessie, we're grateful. And so are the legions who *Sleep Like a Kitten*. ~ ~ We're going to use your picture, with the two little Chessies, on our 1935 calendar, knowing full well there won't be enough to go round.

CHESAPEAKE *and* OHIO *Lines*

Figure 8 "Acknowledgement to Chessie" ad from January 1935 *The Rail*

The use of Chessie began to expand when she appeared in an ad on the back cover of the March 1934 issue of *The Rail*, C&O's award-winning employee magazine **(Figure 5)**. The same ad was repeated inside the front cover in the next month's issue, then disappeared for a month. When Chessie returned she was in the first ad deviating from the original etching. In this cartoon-like ad, an elderly gentleman in pajamas exclaims, "Porter!!..." to the Pullman porter as he points into his berth where Chessie is soundly sleeping **(Figure 7)**. The same ad repeats in July and then she disappears from the magazine for the rest of the year.

Apparently, this spurt of ads followed by a long silence reflects the doubtful and hesitant attitude that Probert had taken to the Campbell-Ewald idea. In addition, the Chessie name had not yet appeared in any of the ads. However, the Campbell-Ewald report continues, "All during the year, letters kept coming in, and by the end of 1934, Chessie had become so firmly established that Chesapeake & Ohio was forced to publish its 'Acknowledgment to Chessie' advertisement, which won the copy prize for that year." This ad appeared in the Jan. 1, 1935, C&O public timetable in a two-page format and in the centerspread of *The Rail* for that same month **(Figure 8)**. The ad, which also ran in a wide variety of nationally circulated magazines, read:

> A year ago we found you, a lonely little kitten looking for a home. You found one and we found a friend. When we published your picture, a lot of folks said: "Who ever heard of using a gol darned cat to advertise a railroad!" But you told 'em, Chessie! Kids wouldn't go to bed unless you were near. Families called on us to settle dinner table arguments over whether that was your tail or your paw on the pillow. Overnight you became the Kitten of the Hour. But more than that, Chessie, you suggested as no array of high pressure language could do, the supreme comfort of Chesapeake & Ohio's genuinely air-conditioned trains. The sight of you on *The George Washington*, snuggled drowsily down for the night under the soft, clean, cool linen made travelers want to come and try it. And they are still coming, and bringing their friends with them. And for all that, Chessie, we're grateful. And so are the legions who "Sleep Like a Kitten." We're going

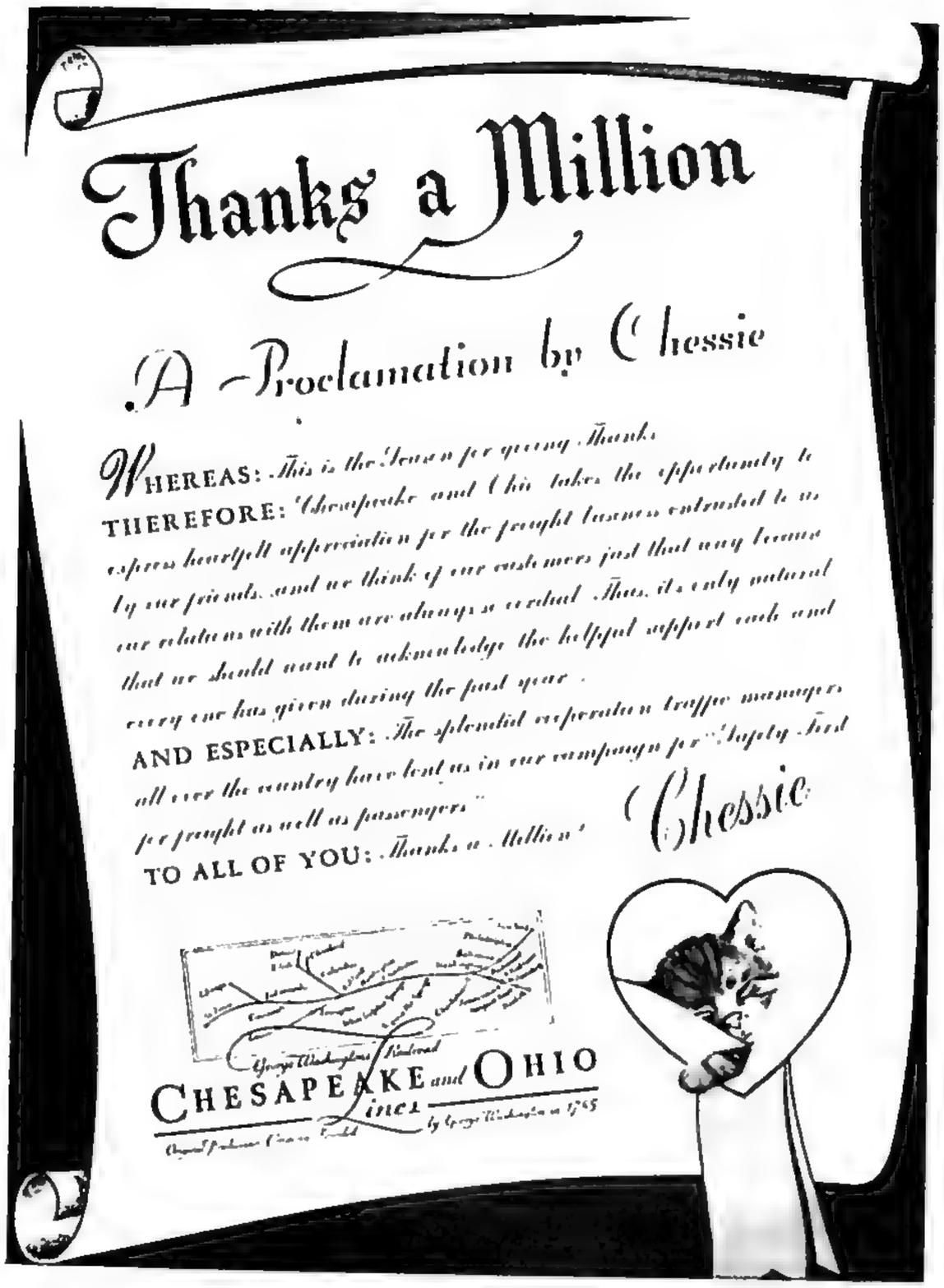

Thanks a Million
A Proclamation by Chessie
WHEREAS: This is the season for giving Thanks
THEREFORE: Chesapeake and Ohio takes the opportunity to express heartfelt appreciation for the freight business entrusted to us by our friends, and we think of our customers just that way because our relations with them are always cordial. Thus, it's only natural that we should want to acknowledge the helpful support each and every one has given during the past year.
AND ESPECIALLY: The splendid cooperation traffic managers all over the country have lent us in our campaign for "Safety First" for freight as well as passengers.
TO ALL OF YOU: Thanks a Million!
Chessie
CHESAPEAKE and OHIO
Lines

Figure 9 (above) "Fanmail for Chessie" ad from 1935

Figure 10 (right) "Proclamation by Chessie" ad from 1936

to use your picture, with the two little Chessies on our 1935 calendar knowing full well there won't be enough to go 'round.

Important in this ad were: the first use of the name Chessie (which came from "Chesapeake"), and the appearance of two additional kittens — smaller than Chessie and striking exactly the same pose (actually reduced versions of the original). This three-kitten illustration has become known as "Chessie and the Kittens," the two smaller kittens representing her first family. After more than a year in the C&O's service, they also symbolized *The Sportsman* and *The FFV*, while Chessie by herself still rode *The George*. In addition, C&O used "Chessie and the Kittens" on its 1935 calendar. In spite of a charge of 25 cents each to cover mailing costs, the 100,000-copy run quickly disappeared. This charge was dropped in 1939 and thereafter the calendars were issued free. The text of the "acknowledgement ad" also appeared on the calendar under the tear-off monthly pages.

According to the Campbell-Ewald report, "In 1935, we again suggested that Chesapeake & Ohio feature Chessie in its advertising. But, inasmuch as that same year was the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of the predecessor company of the Chesapeake & Ohio, Mr. Probert thought it best to let the campaign wait." *The Rail*, in the February 1935 issue, reports as follows on the award of the advertising association in the Outdoor Advertising Art Exhibit in Chicago for 1934:

> Within one month after the 1935 kitten made her appearance, more than twenty thousand letters were received from folks who solemnly averred they simply could not get through 1935 without a copy. At one period, the letters were received at a rate of more than one thousand a day.... The letters came from every state in the Union and from many foreign countries and from people in almost every walk of life.... Our guess that there wouldn't be enough to go around was correct, and the supply has been exhausted. Chessie was a sell-out!

The rest of 1935 was devoted to George Washington as the father of the C&O (through the James River & Kanawha Canal) and to the colonial theme that the C&O had been nurturing so carefully for the preceding six or seven years. However, Chessie did put in some appearances that year, with ads including the phrase "Sleep like a kitten, and arrive fresh as a daisy on George Washington's railroad," which appeared in each issue of *The Rail* beginning in June (**Figure 6**). A

The RAIL
CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO RAILWAY AND PERE MARQUETTE RAILWAY
DECEMBER
To Build a Better Understanding Between the People Who Use the Railroads and the People Who Run Them
1935

Figure 11 Cover of December 1935 *The Rail*

Figure 12 1936 calendar

Figure 13 This evocative ad was published in some 1935 magazines showing the children envisioning their honeymoon trip on *The George Washington* as Chessie and her kittens play.

Figure 14 "Heart on His Sleeve" ad from 1936

Figure 15 "Trump in Travel" ad from 1936

"Fan Mail for Chessie" ad appeared in the Jan. 26 edition of *Newsweek* magazine and the Feb. 4 edition of *Time* magazine to acknowledge the people who had asked for calendars and to tell folks that there weren't any left **(Figure 9)!**

One of the greatest Chessie ads appears on the cover of the December 1935 edition of *The Rail* and was repeated in *Time* and *Newsweek* that month. It shows Santa Claus looking at the reader with a finger to his lips for silence as he pours milk into three bowls. In the background are Chessie and the two kittens asleep in the green-curtained Pullman berth. It's a wonderful ad that's little known and seldom seen today among all the Chessie memorabilia available **(Figure 11)**.

With the anniversary celebrations of 1935 over, 1936 would indeed be Chessie's year. Campbell-Ewald's report says:

> In 1936, this agency created the first Chessie campaign, which was the biggest success of the year — in travel advertising or any other field. This was built around the slogan "America's Sleepheart" — a phrase which was soon on everyone's lips. It struck so popular a note that it was immediately accepted by the public as synonymous with Chessie — and the coining of it enabled the Chesapeake & Ohio for the first time to make full use of Chessie as an advertising trade-character.
>
> This was very important. Because until an advertising idea is placed in such a form that it can be merchandised and used, it cannot be 100% effective. By giving Chessie a "handle" — "America's Sleepheart" — we were able to create not one advertisement but a whole series of them — a creative contribution that is equal in importance to the actual discovery of the character. At the end of the year, the results of the campaign demonstrated that. Requests for calendars reached a new high — and more letters than ever were received.[2]

By 1936 (see **Figure 12** for calendar), the recitation of "Chessie Fan Mail" in *The Rail* had assumed what would become a familiar and expected regularity. The unabashed enthusiasm with which the public took to Chessie seems a little strange to us living in our present, allegedly "super-sophisticated" age. But we must re-

Figure 16 1937 calendar

Figure 17 1939 calendar

Figure 18 1941 calendar

Figure 19 1942 calendar

Figure 20 "Hope Chest" from 1936

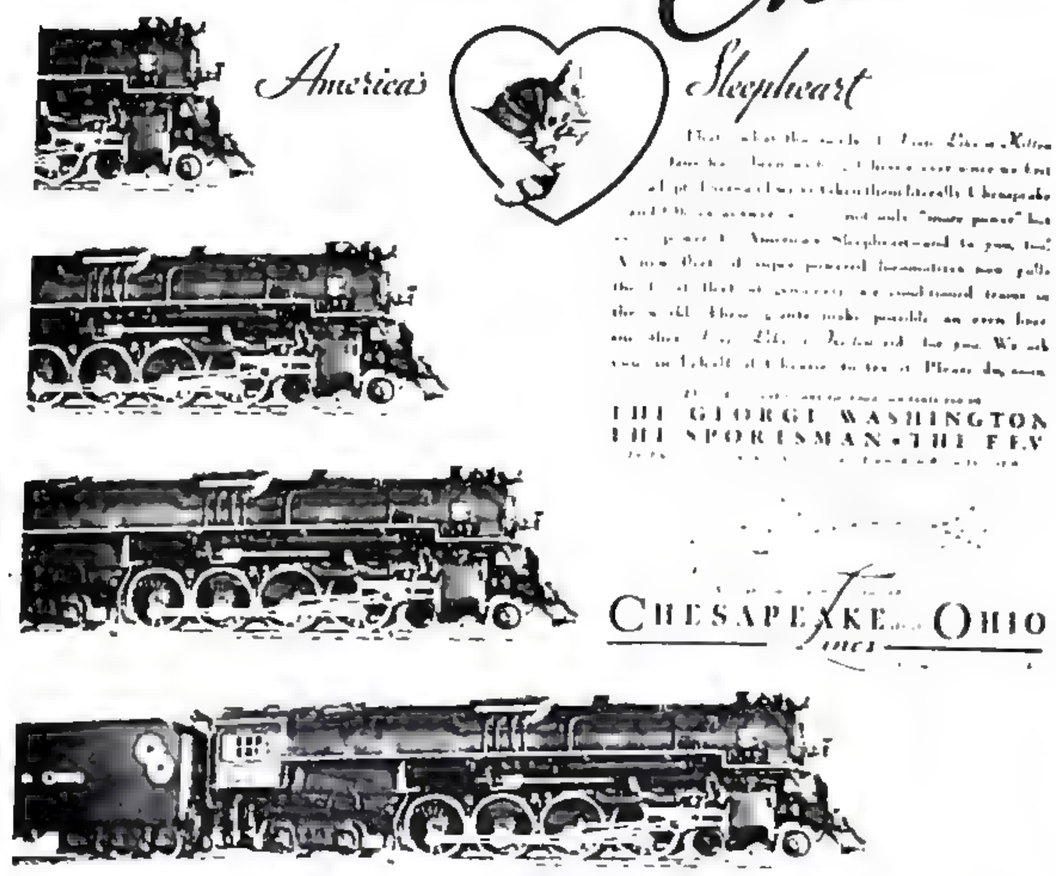


Figure 21 "More Power to Chessie" in 1936

member that in 1933-36, the nation was just beginning to struggle out of the darkest financial days of its history; and Chessie somehow seemed to reflect a feeling of innocence, of confidence, and of contentment, all qualities which people in all stations of life were seeking. It is perhaps that almost "spiritual" quality about Mr. Gruenewald's simple creation that made her such a success. Listen now to the voices of the 1936 fan mail:

★ "How do I know Chessie's a success? Because, as I look at her face I see what the League of Nations, Ethiopia, the World Court, Hitler and me (sic) want — peace."

★ "I am writing this for the first grade. I am in the first grade, too. Thanks for the calendar you sent us. We like the kittens very much. P.S. My teacher told me how to spell the hardest words."

★ "I'll trade a car of freight for two Chessie calendars."

★ "Send me a calendar and I, in return, will promise on my word of honor that the next time I take an eastern trip, I will ride on your railroad and no other."

★ "I'm routing a car of freight via your line. Charge it up to Chessie."

★ "I received your calendar and assure you that it has sold me on your line and I intend to go your way the next trip out."

★ "I am planning on going east to Washington, D.C., in the spring. Your kitten calendar has drawn my attention to the fact that the Chesapeake & Ohio is the feasible route."

★ "If Chessie chooses *The George Washington*, no finer recommendation is needed."

★ "Chessie is something that not even the most cynical of our generation could pass up without a smile. When I can afford to travel, you may be sure it will be a la Chessie."

Also, 1936 was the year in which Chessie first went selling freight transportation, a job she'd learn a lot more about after the decline of the passenger business. An ad appeared in the Nov. 21 *Traffic World* as a "Proclamation" on a parchment scroll in which Chessie expresses her appreciation for "the freight business entrusted to us by our friends." The seal on the proclamation portrayed Chessie in a heart **(Figure 10)**. Other 1936 ads also showed Chessie in her heart on the sleeve of a smiling dining car waiter **(Figure 14)**, on a deck of playing cards — the "hearts," of course! **(Figure 15)**, on a young lady's hope chest **(Figure 20)**, in connection with the C&O's new passenger locomotives of 1935 (the now-famous 4-8-4 *Greenbrier* class) **(Figure 21)**, at the head of a parade **(Figure 22)**, and also among a chorus of voices singing "Let me call you Sleepheart" as a paraphrase of the old familiar song **(Figure 23)**. With "Hearts and Flowers" as America's

The big Parade
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON • THE SPORTSMAN • THE F.F.V.
CHESAPEAKE and OHIO Lines
America's Sleepheart
SLEEP LIKE A KITTEN
CHESAPEAKE and Ohio LINES

Figure 22 "The Big Parade" from 1936

Figure 23 "Let Me Call You Sleepheart" from 1936

No. 1 hit tune that year, Chessie fit right in, and did so in numerous ads, including a fancy full page in the September issue of *Fortune* **(Figure 27)**.

Chessie's 1937 ad campaign was given a new twist, according to the Campbell-Ewald ad agency report, by adding the phrase that the C&O was "the railroad with a heart," thus tying Chessie in with the railroad and the people who operated it. Leading off that year's campaign was the front cover of *The Rail* for January showing a yellow-haired baby just getting up from a good night's sleep (undoubtedly in a C&O Pullman) with Chessie watching over him in the background. The scene was framed in the heart symbol. The 1937 calendar also featured the same little boy and his sister kneeling in prayer at the Pullman berth while Chessie sleeps soundly in "Lower 4." In addition, another calendar page portrayed Chessie and her kittens in their familiar pose (see **Figure 16** for calendar).

Carrying on the heart theme, an ad was published in the February 1937 issue of *The Rail* (and was repeated in many national magazines throughout the year) that had Chessie again in a heart shape. She was superimposed over the double-track main line of the C&O with the caption "Heartstrings of Steel" and the following copy **(see Figure 29)**:

> The railroad with a heart — Chesapeake & Ohio — is truly in tune with the travel world! Upon its heartstrings of steel resounds the most responsive chord that has ever been struck in transportation..."Sleep Like a Kitten and Arrive Fresh as a Daisy!" Discover for yourself this harmonious way of traveling. Learn on *The George Washington*, the most wonderful train in the world.

Yet another member of Chessie's family arrived in 1937, that being "Peake — Chessie's Old Man," as the ads described him. Peake, a handsome tomcat almost always pictured in years to come seated in a typical erect cat pose, became the proud father of the two little kittens that had been seen in the company of Chessie for two years. Though his coming had been a little delayed, Peake made a great hit. With him the Chessie family was well on its way to stardom, not only in the railroad world but among a broad spectrum of the public who were then captivated by railroad advertising as much as we are today by airline ads **(Figure 30)**.

The Peake ad was published for the first time in the June 1937 issue of *Life* magazine to coincide with Father's Day **(Figure 35)**. Its text read:

> On Father's Day, we present Chessie's Old Man, father of the famous kittens. A lot of folks have been wondering about "papa" ever since Chessie had her kittens. As we mentioned before, he's a traveling man — but we found

Lower 9 has gone to war ... and so has Upper 6 ... and box car CkO 6532 ... and coal hopper CkO 174337 ... and all railroad services that were readily yours in peacetime. America's railroads, with the cooperation of shippers and travelers, give first call on all services to Uncle Sam. As the necessities of war—and Victory—demand more and more wartime transportation, we know that you, our customers, will patriotically and cheerfully say: "Move over, Cheese."
Chesapeake and Ohio Lines

Figure 24 1943 calendar

Figure 25 1944 calendar

Our thoughts like those of Cheerie are on those far away. We're dreaming of the time when the heroic men and women now serving the nation will be home again, devoting their lives to pleasant pursuits at last. That's why folks of Chesapeake and Ohio are doing everything in their power to speed the day when they can return.
Cheerie knows that the wartime performance of railroads is hastening the day when she again will resume her usual role — symbol of quiet restfulness — inviting travelers to Chesapeake and Ohio to Sleep Like a Kitten.
Chesapeake and Ohio Railway

Figure 26 1945 calendar

("Hearts and Flowers")
SLEEP LIKE A KITTEN
AND ARRIVE FRESH AS A DAISY
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON • THE SPORTSMAN • THE F.F.V.
CHESAPEAKE and OHIO Lines

Figure 27 "Hearts and Flowers" from 1936

Figure 28 "All Through the Night" from 1936

> him for you on the Chesapeake and Ohio, and here he is! With his discriminating tastes, it's only natural that he would prefer The Railroad with a Heart! And, oh, yes, we almost forgot to tell you..."his name is Peake!"

Throughout 1937, the "Heartstrings of Steel" and "Railroad with a Heart" themes continued, with Peake making his first appearance in the December timetable issue. The calendar became ever more popular as well. The new *Life* magazine, in its Feb. 22, 1937, issue, carried a full-page ad telling readers that the C&O had been its largest buyer of ad space, and that was for the 1937 calendar. The ad showed Chessie and the little yellow-haired children and asked interested people to send a quarter to cover postage if they wanted a calendar. Within 24 hours of the release of the magazine, C&O had received 2,400 requests — with a total of 7,349 in the first six weeks. *Life* used this as a selling point for its own advertisements and their ability to reach a receptive audience. So it was that Chessie helped to bring into existence one of the most important and colorful photo magazines ever published.

When the time arrived for the 1938 calendar, no one was surprised to see Peake prominently featured on the first page (which, for reasons of economy, included the calendar for the first four months of the year), followed by Chessie herself and then Chessie and her kittens. The ads for these calendars appeared in ten nationally distributed magazines, as well as *The Rail*, and showed Chessie and the kittens on one page of an open family album, while Peake was on the other page. The copy said, in part, "The happy family can be depended upon to uphold the tradition of travel comfort on The Railroad with a Heart.... As usual, there won't be enough to go around. But while they last you can secure the 1938 Chessie Calendar by sending 25 cents...."

The Campbell-Ewald report states that Peake was that ad agency's creation, including artwork, and that "at the end of 1937, Chessie, by dint of a constant flow of fresh ideas, had increased her popularity to a new high." The report concludes:

> So successful were the freight and passenger campaigns which we prepared for the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway that they are today studied in advertising courses given by practically every college in the United States. And when you think of the hundreds of thousands of Chessie calendars that have been sold (referring to the nominal charge for shipping) — not given away — the large number of decks of Chessie playing cards that likewise have been purchased — and the widespread interest that the American public has in Chessie and

Figure 29 "Heartstrings of Steel" from 1937

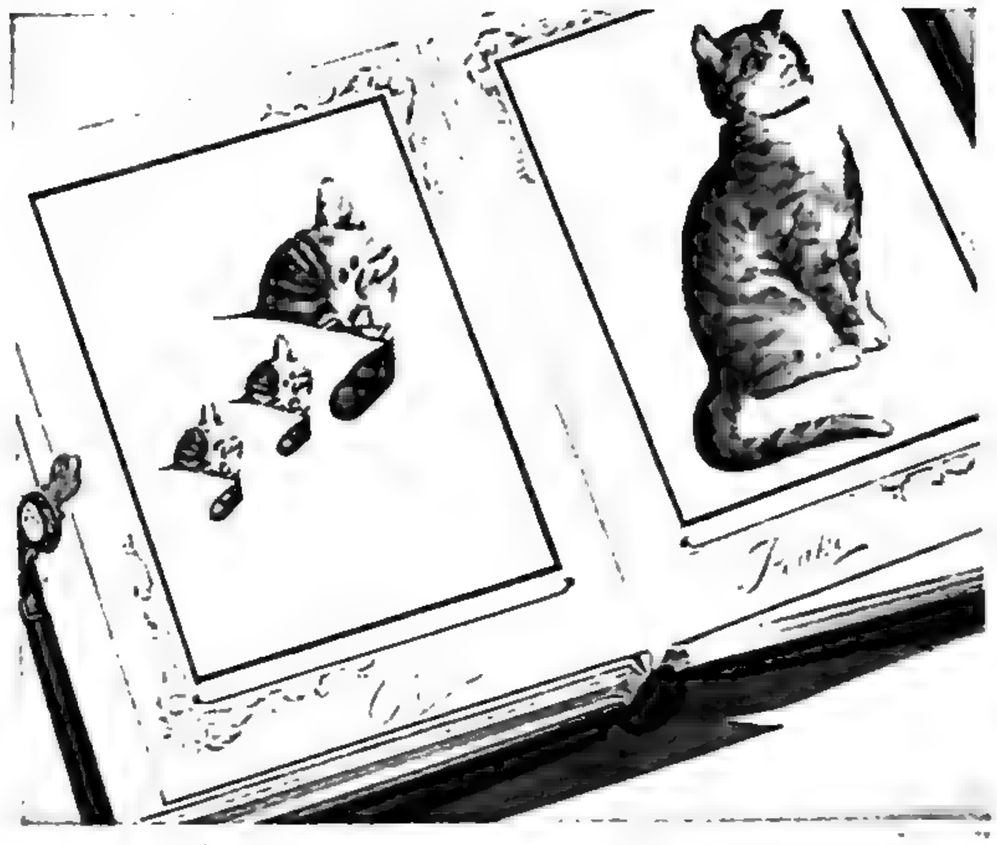


Figure 30 "The Chessie Family Album" from 1937

her entire family, you cannot help but realize how completely this agency has helped to put Chesapeake & Ohio "on the map."

While this may have been a self-serving conclusion, it was nonetheless true. The C&O had really burst onto the advertising scene with *The Sportsman* passenger train and gained steam with *The George Washington* and its colonial theme, but had really come to full maturity with Chessie and her family. It would be true in the decades to follow that Chessie, the railroad cat, would become one of the most enduring advertising symbols in American history.

In an interview with *Advertising and Selling* magazine in 1936, Robert Diserens of the Campbell-Ewald agency said, "As long as people continue their amazing interest, she will go on living. I think that will be for a long, long time."

In 1937 Ruth Carroll wrote a children's book called "Chessie and Her Kittens" as a sequel to "Chessie," which she had written the year before. So after only three years, Chessie already was becoming ingrained into the collective education and maturation process of a whole generation of young people.

Some confusion exists as to when Chessie playing cards were first issued. From reading the invaluable Campbell-Ewald report, it seems they were in circulation well before 1937. In 1938 a new deck was issued featuring both Chessie and Peake. They have been reprinted countless times and are still in production by the present-day CSX Corporation and its licensees.

Also in 1938 Chessie's name was given to "The Chessie Corridor," which was the territory served by the C&O and targeted by the railway's Industrial Development Department to bring in line-side industry. So Chessie assumed another role: helping the industrial development people attract more business to her railway **(Figure 36)**.

In addition, 1938 saw the tempo of the Chessie ad campaign slow down. She appeared in *The Rail* only once that year, and her appearances in the national magazines were much more limited. It seems that C&O had decided the job was done and that Chessie and her family would continue their momentum, abetted by the annual calendar and some well-placed ads just to keep the consciousness intact. Of course, Chessie and the kittens had returned to the public passenger timetable folder cover with the July 5, 1936, issue and stayed there. And in October 1937, the timetable cover was changed from the white, green and yellow colors to what was to become familiar over the next 10 years —

Thousands — millions — of loved ones are now "back together again" — and the hope of us all is that never again need they be separated. For the part it was our privilege to play in helping speed this reunion, we of the Chesapeake and Ohio are truly grateful
CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO RAILWAY

Figure 31 1946 calendar

Figure 32 1949 calendar

Figure 33 1953 calendar

Figure 34 1959 calendar

On Father's Day

We present

Chessie's Old Man

FATHER OF HER FAMOUS KITTENS

A lot of folks have been wondering about "papa" ever since Chessie had her kittens. As we mentioned before, he's a traveling man—but we found him for you on the Chesapeake and Ohio, and here he is! With his discriminating tastes, it's only natural that he would prefer The Railroad With a Heart! And, oh yes, we almost forgot to tell you . . . *his name is Peake!*

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON
THE SPORTSMAN · THE F. F. V.

George Washington's Railroad
CHESAPEAKE and OHIO
Lines
Original Packet Company Founded by George Washington in 1785

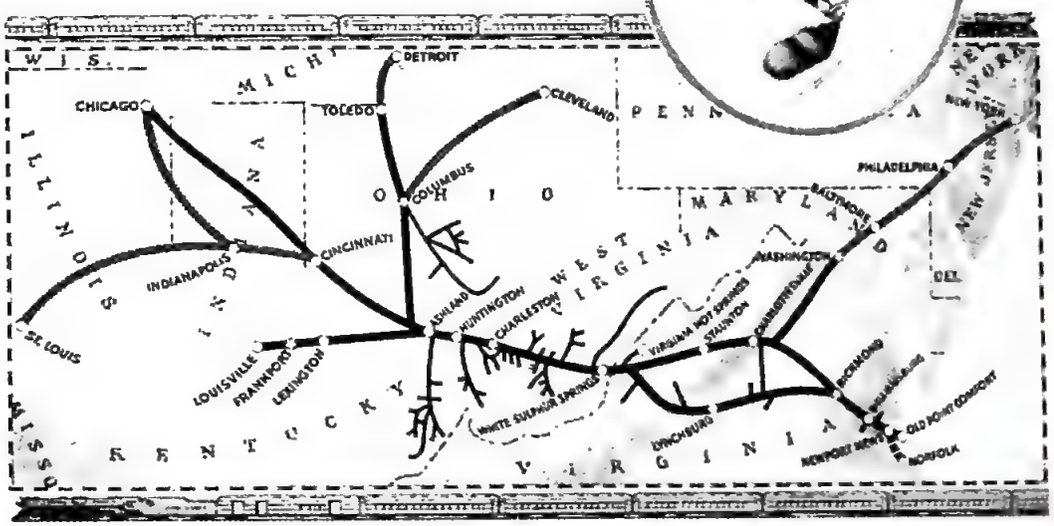
Figure 35 "Peake" from 1937

THIS IS

The Chessie Corridor

...THE PICTURESQUE EAST-WEST TRAVEL WAY

Westward from bustling sea-ports of the Atlantic...through the land of America's beginnings...out to the Gateway Cities that open on the great west...there lies THE CHESSIE CORRIDOR. *And through this Corridor runs the Chesapeake and Ohio's fine fleet of genuinely air-conditioned trains*—THE GEORGE WASHINGTON—THE SPORTSMAN—THE F. F. V.



EASTWARD OR WESTWARD, The Chessie Corridor rewards the traveler with a wealth of varied scenic beauty and historic interest. In the eastern end lies the storied ground where our nation was made free. Then, as your air-conditioned train moves west, history unfolds another tremendous chapter—the struggle of the 1860s—for you cross the very fields where tides of battle flowed... Westward, through the Piedmont and Shenandoah Valleys and over the majestic Blue Ridge Mountains between them...Over the picturesque Alleghenies, down through the most thrilling canyon east of the Rockies—the New River Gorge...Then you follow the great winding Ohio River...the blue grass region of Kentucky...on northward to the beauty of the Great Lakes. Stimulating sights...comfortable riding...perfect contentment...in whatever direction you travel The Chessie Corridor...climaxed in a quiet sleeping car that invites you to Sleep Like a Kitten.

George Washington's Railroad

CHESAPEAKE and OHIO Lines

Original Predecessor Company Founded by George Washington in 1785

For reservations or other information please communicate with

F. E. LANDMEIER, D. P. A. • 714 14TH STREET, N. W. • PHONE NATIONAL 0821

Figure 36 "Chessie Corridor" from 1938

Figure 37 1956 calendar

Figure 38 Timetable cover typical of the 1937-47 era showing Chessie and the kittens in heart shapes.

solid red/orange with a black stripe at both top and bottom, plus Chessie in the heart shape on one panel and she and the kittens on the other panel. Peake made his first appearance in the timetable in December 1937.

The 1939 campaign was again a modest, scaled-down one. A probable contributing factor was declining revenues and profits in 1937-38 as a result of the post-Depression slump. Revenues were down six percent in 1937 compared with 1936 and down again 22 percent in 1938 compared with 1937. By 1939, however, things were on the upswing that would lead to the wartime boom. The calendar that year **(Figure 17)** showed a little girl asleep in her berth with her hand sticking out from beneath the sheets and a red bow is her ear.... The pose was exactly that of Chessie (the bow is the ear!), and Chessie in her familiar pose appeared in miniature in the lower left corner. It was an interesting adaptation but tended to push Chessie aside for a more human representation of the pleasures of C&O travel. Some nationally distributed ads for that year show Chessie inviting the public to travel the C&O route. The ads tell about "Travel Dividends" for family travel, about the pleasures of eating on C&O's gracious colonial diners and, of course, about the air conditioned comfort of a private Pullman berth.

That year, the railroad industry's favorite mascot also advertised "Chessie's Travel Packages" for the New York World's Fair **(Figure 40)**. But it was 1939,

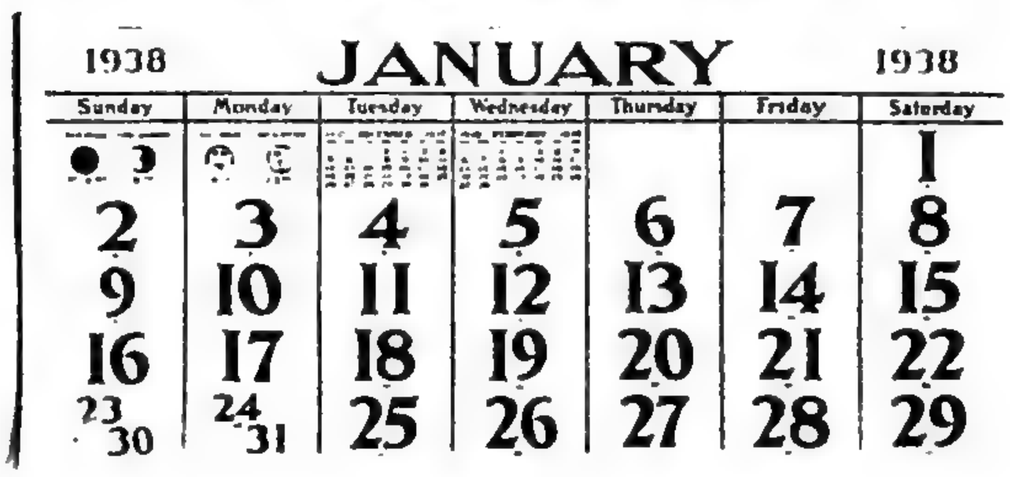


Figure 39 In 1938 the demand for calendars among railroad people themselves for offices was so great that a non-Chessie calendar was issued strictly for office use showing this scene. A similar calendar with a different "Freight Offis" scene also was published for 1939.

and the clouds of war were gathering to the east while Americans took the trains to New York to enjoy a last moment in the sunlight...a glittering fair that extolled the moderne and looked to a brave new futuristic society. In retrospect it was, perhaps, one last attempt to escape from the inescapable fate of war and a futile effort to throw off the burden of guilt and fear that had resulted from the Great Depression, then so close and now so remote. But Chessie hurried her patrons to and from New York in solid cuts of cars coupled onto the Pennsylvania Railroad's finest trains north of Washington. The people came in droves to see the glittering alabaster cities portrayed at the fair. However, beneath it all was the specter of an immediate future not at all like the one envisioned.

The 1940 calendar showed Chessie and her kittens in what would become their accustomed accommodation, "Lower $9''^3$ in a C&O heavyweight

TELL YOUR FRIENDS about
Chessie's
"TRAVEL PACKAGES"
TO THE NEW YORK
WORLD'S FAIR
CAREFREE TRAVEL is planned travel with all accommodations arranged—no chance of disappointments—hotel reservations assured and your expenditures budgeted in advance
That's what Chesapeake and Ohio offers you in "TRAVEL PACKAGES"—planned trips at special low rates to make your World's Fair visit happier from the moment you step aboard one of Chesapeake and Ohio's air-conditioned trains—THE GEORGE WASHINGTON—THE SPORTSMAN—THE F. F. V. The "TRAVEL PACKAGES" outlined below are suggestions. They can be arranged or changed to suit your taste—and all may be had at reduced rates. For full information and reservations call or write
O. W. SPAIN, General Passenger Agent, Richmond, Va.
Six Travel Packages for World's Fair Visitors
C&O RAILWAY
CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO LINES

Figure 40 1939 World's Fair ad

Pullman, while Peake dozed in the clothes netting above them. A cozy scene, indeed!

Americans had begun a somewhat delayed national defense preparation effort; the pace of life was quickening. The people who had so recently escaped the cares of the Great Depression were troubled by the war across the seas. But they turned to the confidence, the innocence, and the peace that Chessie and her family seemed to represent. Herewith the voices of Chessie's fans:

★ From a Connecticut squire: "You and your picture always have been one of my chief sources of repose and refreshment from the cares and toil of this troubled world."

★ From an Ohio matron: "To me, Chessie is the embodiment of peace and rest in an otherwise topsy, turvy world."

★ From an eastern steel corporation executive: "It's hard to believe that in these feverish times there could be such relaxation, even in a C&O sleeper; but in any event, I'm sure your picture will bring countless moments of pleasure and relief from strain to all your friends."

★ From a Chicago mother: "It wouldn't be Christmas to these two youngsters without one of your Chessies."

★ From a woman in Missouri: "Chessie has become a member of our family and we would miss her greatly if we were deprived of her companionship."

★ From a Canadian resort owner who had a Chessie picture on his wall: "Many Americans greet it like an old friend."

★ From a college dean in Michigan: "The only hazard we fear is that most of the 2,600 students will be enticed to leave school to take to travel under conditions so alluring."

Yet it seemed that perhaps the fears of war were more profound as 1941 opened. America was still uninvolved but much affected by the cataclysm of European and Asian war. The Chessie calendar for that year **(Figure 18)** showed the famous cat superimposed over a darkened, starlit sky with an olive green C&O train, its coach and sleeper windows ablaze with yellow light, rolling through the mountains somewhere on the C&O.

The text read, in part: "Though the seasons succeed each other with precise regularity and the old order constantly yields to the new, Chessie holds fast to her everlasting wish that everyone, everywhere, every night, will share the tranquil comfort that is yours when you 'Sleep Like a Kitten.'"

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[2]We discuss at great length the aesthetic, artistic, emotional and mass appeals of the Chessie advertisements and calendars, but we should spend a short time examining whether or not Chessie was effective in attracting business to the C&O, which was, after all, her *raison d'être*. This is not an easy task since no specific statistics were kept, or at least none have survived. If we look strictly at the C&O passenger statistics over Chessie's life, we can draw a few inferences if nothing else.

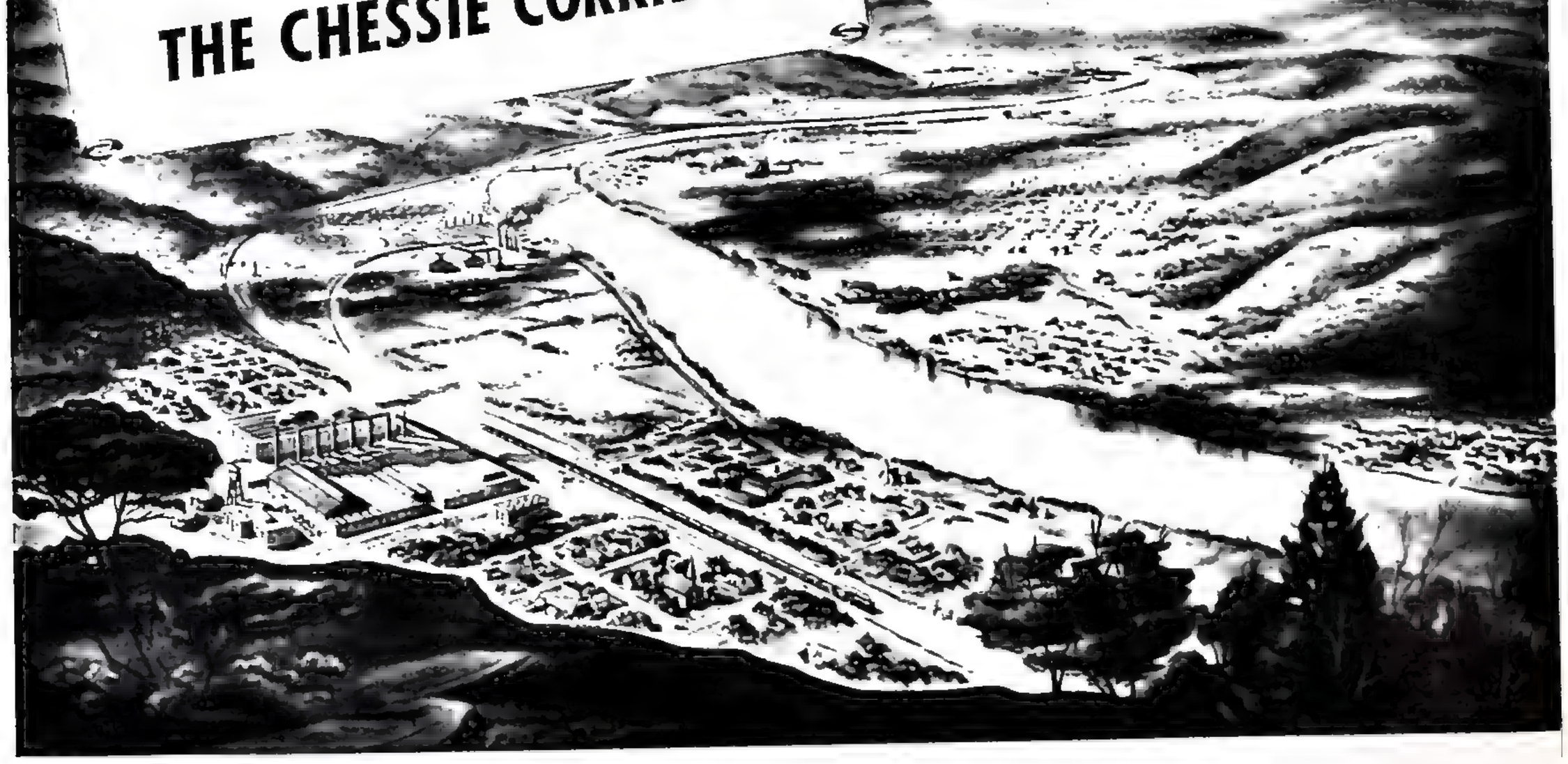
C&O's pre-Chessie high for the number of passengers hauled was in 1921 when 8,767,811 people were carried a total of 384,045,169 passenger-miles (that is, one passenger carried one mile; if you carry one passenger seven miles, it's seven passenger-miles; if you carry two passengers four miles, it's eight passenger-miles, etc.). The passenger-miles figure is important because when compared with the number of passengers carried it gives an idea of the breakdown of long-distance to short-distance trips. By dividing the total number of passengers carried into the number of passenger-miles, an average trip distance is derived. The longer this average trip the higher the percentage of long-distance travelers to short-distance, or local, passengers.

In 1930 C&O carried 2,608,573 passengers and generated 164,956,338 passenger-miles. The drastic decline from the 1921 figure reflects primarily the rise of good roads, cheap automobiles and bus common

The eyes of George Washington ...

first saw "the shape of things to come" in

THE CHESSIE CORRIDOR

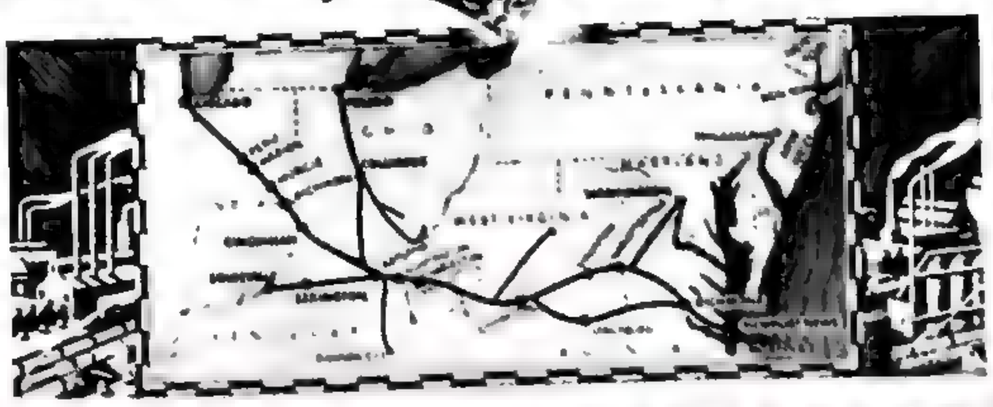


WHEN THE LAND WEST of Albemarle County, Virginia, was largely wilderness, George Washington gazed through a surveyor's theodolite and saw ... *the future!* He foresaw "a rising empire" of commerce—yet he didn't know of the enormous resources beneath his feet ... resources which today bring more and more factories into industry's next great expansion area—*The Chessie Corridor.*

Here, economically close to major markets, diverse industries prosper ... drawing upon *The Corridor's* rich minerals and the yield of farm and forest ... using *The Corridor's* unlimited low-cost power ... employing the region's native-born working people. Perhaps *your* business is destined for future expansion here. As a responsible executive, you should know the entire story.

FACTS—for the man who makes decisions—Information on this important area is now organized and available in a new 56-page book you'll be proud to have in your library—"*The Chessie Corridor*... Industry's Next Great Expansion Area." This beautiful book is a graphic survey of the resources, conditions and opportunities which beckon industry to *The Corridor.* Copies will be mailed to business executives requesting them from INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICE, Chesapeake and Ohio Lines, Huntington, W.Va.

"Will a cute little kitten be the symbol for Industry's next great expansion area?"



THE CHESSIE CORRIDOR ★ *Served by CHESAPEAKE and OHIO LINES*

Figure 41 1941 "Chessie Corridor" ad

carriers, and these affected mainly the local, short-distance passengers. The Great Depression cut C&O passenger traffic to a low point of 978,850 passengers carried 95,359,368 miles in 1933. Beginning in 1934 as the country pulled out of the Depression AND as Chessie came on board to advertise the C&O, the passenger count was up about 100,000, but the passenger-miles were up to 122,171,095, a 33 percent increase. This means that the average trip was up from 97 miles in 1933 to 113 miles in 1934, showing a marked increase in the number of long-distance travelers.

By 1937 traffic had increased to 1,918,707 passengers carried 171,932,490 miles, a peak until the war-time boom started in 1941. With average trip length up to 125 miles by 1941, it already was evident that the long-distance passenger had supplanted the local passenger as C&O's principal customer and we have to assume, given the popularity of Chessie through the calendar, the "fan mail" and so much other interest, that she did indeed influence people who were taking long trips to travel on the C&O.

Unfortunately even Chessie couldn't stem the tide of passengers away from the rails after World War II. So we see a slow decrease in passengers transported by C&O in the two or three years following the war and a precipitous decline beginning in 1948. A more empirical analysis, it would seem, cannot be made.

[3]For those who have not been in or are not familiar with Pullman sleeping cars before the introduction of modern all-bedroom cars, the standard configuration was 12 berths and one or two private drawing rooms. The berths were sets of facing seats during the day that were converted to berths by placing a board and mattress on the lower part of the seats and then lowering a hanging bed from the ceiling. The lower berth was always preferable because passengers didn't have to climb into it on a ladder, and it was a little more spacious and easier riding. Berths were separated from the hall by heavy green curtains with the berth number marked on each. Restrooms for passengers to get into and out of their pajamas were located at the ends of the car but most struggled in and out behind the green curtains. Chessie the C&O cat is portrayed in her first Pullman car scene as being in "Lower 4" (1937 calendar). Later, she always would be shown in "Lower 9" until she moved up to the all-room cars in the postwar era.

CHAPTER 3

CHESSIE GOES TO WAR

Figure 42 Defense Bond ad from February 1942 *The Rail*

In late 1941 C&O produced its 1942 calendar (**Figure 19**). Since thousands of men had already left home for military service, it was appropriate that the designers dress up Peake in the main illustration in an Army visor cap and add a letter he had penned to Chessie describing how he was now helping "national defense" (since war hadn't come when the calendars went to press). The letter noted that C&O was helping, too, moving men and materiel where and when needed. Chessie, the letter said, was doing a good job, also, representing C&O and acting as a symbol of enduring peace.

Then the day of infamy came and America was plunged into the long night of war, and Chessie picked up the mantle on the home front while Peake went off to serve in other climes.

As soon as the ads showing Peake in uniform appeared, a flood of mail poured into the Terminal Tower C&O offices in downtown Cleveland, this time addressed not only to Chessie, but also to Peake. Within 96 hours of publication of the calendar ads in the national magazines, the C&O Advertising Department under Walter S. Jackson (C&O's advertising manager and chief administrative coordinator of ad agency work) received thousands of letters...twice as many as in the same period the previous year. The mail came from every state in the Union and every province in Canada. Here are some of the comments:

★ From a Chicago woman: "Judging from the determination in the elegant way you hold your head up, it won't be long before Hitler is under the sod. Keep up the good work."

★ From the principal of a nurses training school in Massachusetts: "Three cheers for you and the Chesapeake and Ohio Lines! We feel sure that through your united efforts, Peace and Freedom will be preserved."

★ From a Fort Hancock, N.J., soldier: "The picture of the cat in Army uniform makes me proud to serve my country, where a man can do what he pleases without being afraid to speak."

★ From a Freeport, N.Y., woman: "Chessie calendars are among my most prized possessions. I do not sleep well at home but what a sleep I have on your grand C&O Lines."

★ From a man in Utica, N.Y.: "As a cat fancier of long standing who took his first trip on your railroad as a direct result of the publicity given Chesapeake and Ohio by yourself, Chessie, and the kittens, I am asking for a copy of the 1942 calendar. In return, I promise to patronize the C&O whenever the opportunity affords, not only in appreciation of the calendar, but because your railroad is everything it claims to be."

★ A Sandpoint, Idaho, girl wrote: "There's something about a uniform that does things to a girl's heart. What a thrill to really at last meet you through your latest picture and how superb you look in your new uniform."

In asking for several calendars, the manager of a prominent country club pointed out that these were required for the locker room, front office and caddy house and added, "Our club is one of the best in the Middlewest and last year rated nine pages in *Life* magazine."

A writer from Evanston, Ill., said, "It's a darned shame that you have to be away from your family, but we must all do our share in defense. May I suggest you do your share and more in bringing to the public a sense of the importance of a little peace and happiness through your pictures in the C&O ads."

Figure 43 "America's Sleep Warden" ad from April 1942 *The Rail*

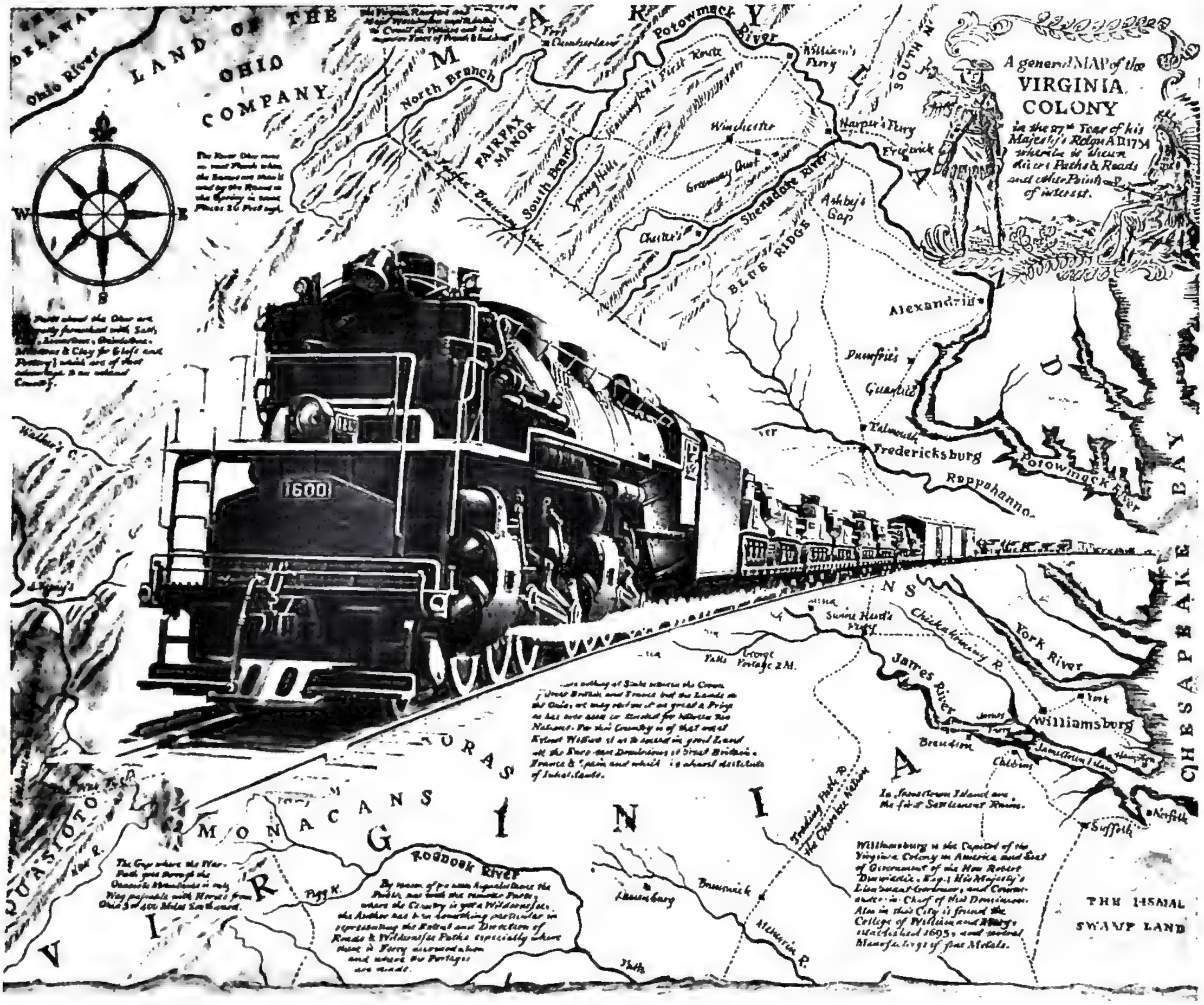
With the February issue of *The Rail*, Chessie made her first appearance selling Defense Bonds **(Figure 42)**. Then later in 1942 one of the cleverest ads of all appeared on the cover of the C&O employees' magazine and in a number of other publications. In this ad Chessie was depicted in the center of the Civil Defense logo (a triangle in a circle) as "America's Sleep Warden" **(Figure 43)**. Civil defense was divided into a number of corps such as messengers, ambulance drivers, fire watchers, etc.; and each had a local chief called a warden, so Chessie fit right in being in charge of America's sleep. This turned out to be a contribution to the war effort, also, because soldiers now occupied C&O Pullmans in ever-increasing numbers. The railroad was moving what would eventually total nearly 10,000 troop trains known as Military Authorization Identification Numbers or "MAINs," as they are called in military and railroad terminology.

Still later in 1942 C&O began a series of ads that were among the best railroad advertising of that era. Each showed a different aspect of the railroad and how it contributed to winning the war, from signals to box cars. Each of these ads featured a poster art rendition of the particular subject with Chessie in her familiar pose at the bottom of the page with a new slogan beneath. Before the war the C&O had been using the slogan "Geared to the Go of America," but now the line was changed with a caret and the word "war" written in so that it read, "Geared to the War Go of America" **(Figures 44-47)**.

In the war years 1942 and 1943 emphasis of the Chessie ads changed. No longer was she beckoning tourists and business travelers to the rails for a peaceful sleep; now she was telling them not to ride unless really necessary so as to make room for the soldiers and government employees on travel related to the war. In

"Night and day..."
"Night and day must go the answer
to the front line's stern demand!"
This is the creed of the Quartermaster Corps,
and of us who help them here at home.
And that Answer speaks in a thousand tongues
---in the vicious voice of the heavy guns
---in the roar of airplane engines
---in the drum-beat rhythm of marching men . . .
More . . . more . . . more!
The Answer speeds across the world
---on wings over desert, ocean and tundra
---on ships in tropic seas and arctic waters:
And here at home the tireless freight trains ---
Rolling tonnage no rails have ever known before
---out of the mines with ore and coal
---out of the sleepless factories that work
the clock around to answer the stern demand . . .
Faster . . . faster . . . faster!
"Night and day . . ." You Americans overseas ---
can you hear us? Under the scream of shells,
the rumble of laden trains,
rolling 1¼ million tons of freight a mile every minute!
This year, as last year, we'll keep 'em rolling
Night and day . . . night and day . . .
CHESAPEAKE and OHIO LINES
Geared to the war GO of America!

Figure 44 "Night and Day" ad from 1942



Washington's "Route of Empire" becomes A THOROUGHFARE TO VICTORY!

Forests . . rivers . . . an Indian trail . . and a lone surveyor. With rapt vision, the young George Washington peered into the wilderness . . . and beheld a mighty nation yet unborn. He saw that wilderness as "the channel of commerce to the extensive and valuable trade of a rising empire." The key to the empire, he knew, was *transportation*.

Slowly it began, moving along canals and turnpikes. Then came the railroad . . and the birth of a new age . . turning Washington's wilderness into the important industrial area known today as *The Chessie Corridor*. In its earth is untold wealth that even Washington couldn't foresee. Here is a limitless storehouse of coal . . . great deposits of limestone . . . petroleum . . . natural gas.

Today great industries along the Chesapeake and Ohio rails work ceaselessly for America's victory. Here is an ideal combination of raw materials, low-cost power, nearby markets and excellent transportation. That's why the executive who plans today's war activities—or tomorrow's success in a world at peace—should have an intimate knowledge of *The Chessie Corridor's* many advantages.

HERE ARE THE FACTS YOU NEED—in a 56-page book that gives you quickly, graphically, this essential information. Copies of "The Chessie Corridor . . . Industry's Next Great Expansion Area" will be sent to executives requesting them from INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICE, Chesapeake and Ohio Lines, Huntington, West Virginia.

THE CHESSIE CORRIDOR, *Served by*

CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO LINES

Geared to the *GO* of America!

Serving WASHINGTON • NORFOLK • NEWPORT NEWS • RICHMOND • VA. HOT SPRINGS • WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS • CHARLESTON • HUNTINGTON • ASHLAND • LEXINGTON • LOUISVILLE • CINCINNATI • COLUMBUS • TOLEDO • CHICAGO

Figure 45 "Thoroughfare to Victory" from 1942

Figure 46 "There Goes Uncle Sam" from 1942

Figure 47 "Green Eyed Sentries for Uncle Sam" from 1942

1943 ads Chessie pointed out that passenger travel on American railroads, including the C&O, had quadrupled between 1939 and 1942 **(Figure 48)**. That meant people should plan trips on less crowded days of the week and only if absolutely necessary. It was the era of rationed goods; and while travel was one of those items that was not rationed, everyone was asked to use a lot of self-discipline. Chessie was at the forefront of that campaign **(Figure 49)**.

Then came the C&O calendar for 1943 **(Figure 24)**. It is one of the most evocative, emotional, and memorable of them all. It is set in the green-curtained aisle of a C&O Pullman; on the curtain is the number "9" signifying that this is lower berth Number 9. The Pullman porter in his white jacket has just "made down" the berth and a soldier's cap and suitcase are on the bed. The porter is smiling as he lifts the sheet and sees Chessie with her head on a little pillow and a small sheet over her...resting contentedly **under** the bed. She has given up HER space on *The George Washington* to the soldier boy on his way to fight at freedom's front. The title of the painting is "Lower 9 has gone to War." By the day after Christmas 1942, 27,000 letters had asked for the calendar. Here are some of the comments in those letters:

★ From a friend in New Mexico: "My man's gone to war. Will you send me one of your calendars to remind me that when he travels he might be using the space that you've given up for the duration? My compliments to you."

★ A New Yorker: "If travel conditions don't improve soon, I and others like me will probably join you on the floor. If that's what it takes to win this war — move over."

★ A lady in Marshalltown, Iowa, wrote a verse in her letter:

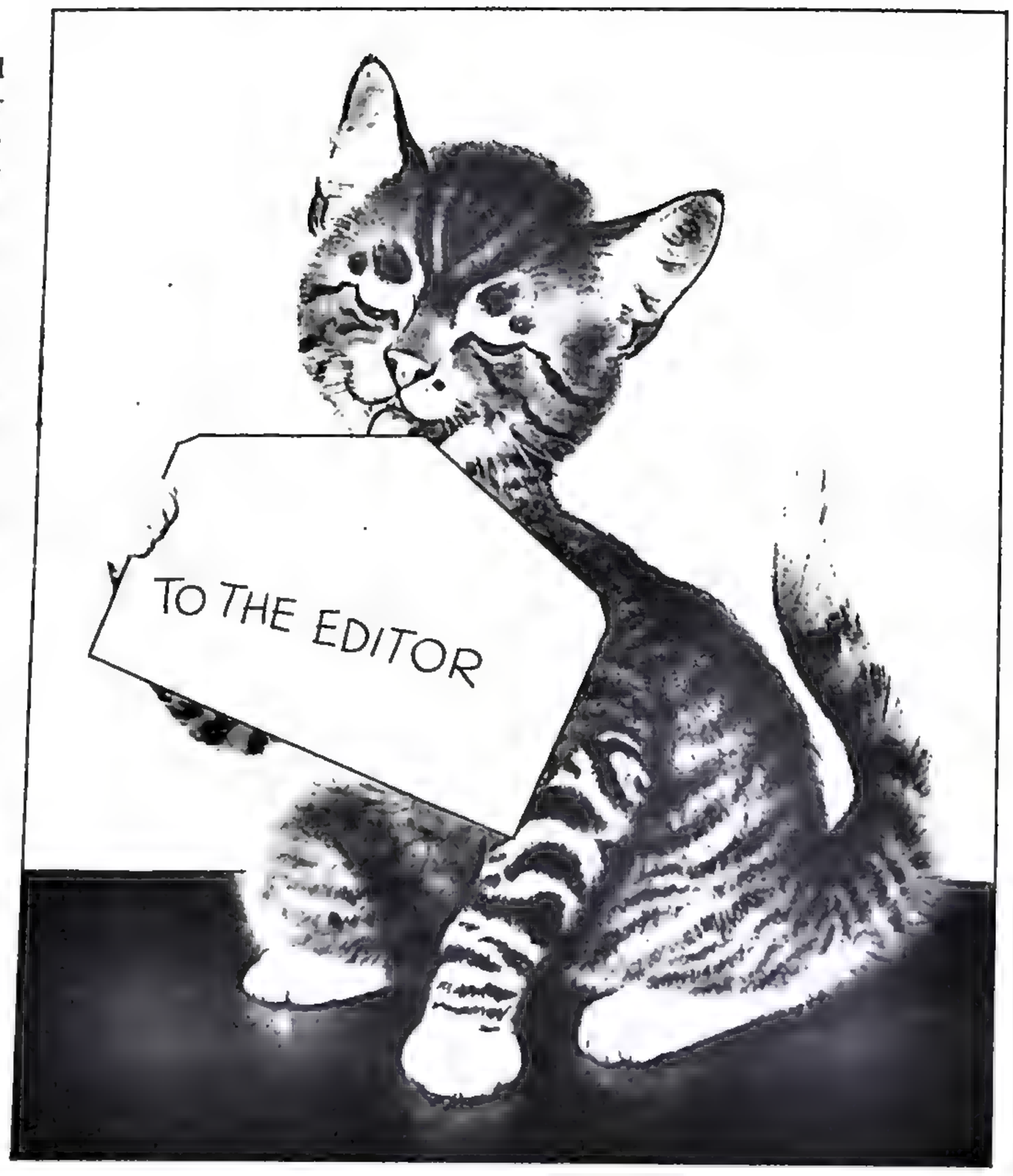
"I can cut down on sugar,
And coffee and such,
But 1943 without Chessie?
That's asking too much!"

★ A fan in Seattle said, "Hope things soon get back normal, so you can have that berth again, and so that soldier can go back to his family — and my husband come back to his."

And that's probably the most eloquent of the 50,000 letters written to Chessie that year!

Through the next three hard years of war, Walter Jackson and his well-run advertising department would grind out some of the best advertising material that the C&O would ever see. Most of it wasn't geared to attracting business, but just to telling the people how well C&O was doing to support the war effort. The road handled a volume of traffic beyond that which glutted the American railroad system in World War I,

Chessie Writes a Letter to the Editors of Time



Sirs:

EVEN a railroad kitten gets around now and then. And I have lately heard some questions asked and comments made about our railroads that have inspired me to write you this letter.

I suppose it is perfectly natural that people who see the enormous load of traffic our railroads are moving in wartime — people who watch millions of tons of freight and thousands of men and arms go rolling by—should say: "I'll bet the roads are coining money these days."

It seems to me that the truth of this question is something every American ought to know.

* * *

Nearly everyone has read or heard that during the recent years of depression the railroads had extreme difficulty making ends meet. In the twelve years following 1929, thirty-seven Class I railroads sought relief from their troubles in bankruptcy. Others staggered along under heavy burdens of debt. And the average earnings of *all* Class I railroads, for that period, were only 2.2% on investment.

But what many people do not know is that, even in 1942, the American railroads earned only a moderate return.

Railroad traffic increased enormously, of course. But so did operating costs, and so did taxes. And the average earnings, for all Class I railroads, in our first year of war, were only five and a half per cent.

* * *

Even the railroad kitten, Mr. Editor, can see that this is not a profiteer's wage.

It is almost the same percentage as the earnings that were fixed by the government for the railroads during the last war. It is within what Congress declared in 1920 to be a fair earning on railroad value. And the Interstate Commerce Commission has repeatedly recognized the principle that a fair return should be gauged by the *average* earnings over a period; that the roads should be allowed to make up in good years for the lean.

* * *

Mine is a small voice. But this is a free country. And it gets my fur up to hear people undervalue our railroads.

Those who do have only to look around them to see how tremendous a part in our national crisis is being taken by cars and coaches and engines—and by the men who run them. For transport is the life-blood of our war effort.

We have reason to be thankful for the strength of our railroads. And equally good reason, with a view to the years ahead, to see that they continue to be strong and sound institutions.

CHESSIE

Chesapeake and Ohio Railway
Cleveland, Ohio.

Figure 48 **"Chessie Writes a Letter to the Editors of *Time*" from 1943**

but was dispatched in this war with efficiency and poise by the C&O and its rail partners (who were no longer competitors but, for a few years, were true partners).

The 1944 calendar **(Figure 25)** showed Peake in a major's cap with a pack and helmet on his back looking wistfully at a pinup portrait of Chessie on his wall, and a letter from Chessie to him lying on the floor where he'd just read it: "Dear Peake: We eagerly await your return from war and here at home we're doing all we can to hasten that day. It's the one thought uppermost in our minds. — Your loving Chessie."

In the years that followed, Chessie continued to support the home front war effort, as did her railroad. The 1945 calendar **(Figure 26)** depicted Chessie in her characteristic half-sleeping pose; and in her dreams she sees Peake receiving a medal from a general for his brave deeds. But the war was still on and the accompanying text was in the vein of earlier years as well:

> Our thoughts, like those of Chessie, are on those far away. We're dreaming of the time when the heroic men and women now serving this nation will be home again, devoting their lives to pleasant pursuits of living. That's why folks of the Chesapeake and Ohio are doing everything in their power to speed the day when they can return. Chessie knows that the performance of railroads is hastening the day she again will resume her usual role — symbol of quiet restfulness — inviting travelers on Chesapeake and Ohio to "Sleep Like a Kitten."

As fate would have it, 1945 was the last of the wartime calendars. When calendar time came in 1946 **(Figure 31)**, Chessie was back again peacefully asleep in "Lower 9" while Peake stands guard in his uniform decked out with medals and ribbons. The two kittens look adoringly at him with his helmet and a tattered souvenir Japanese flag resting in the clothes net above the berth. The text was short and to the point:

> Thousands — millions — of loved ones are now "back together again" — and the hope of us all is that never again need they be separated. For the part it was our privilege to play in helping speed this reunion, we of the Chesapeake and Ohio are truly grateful.

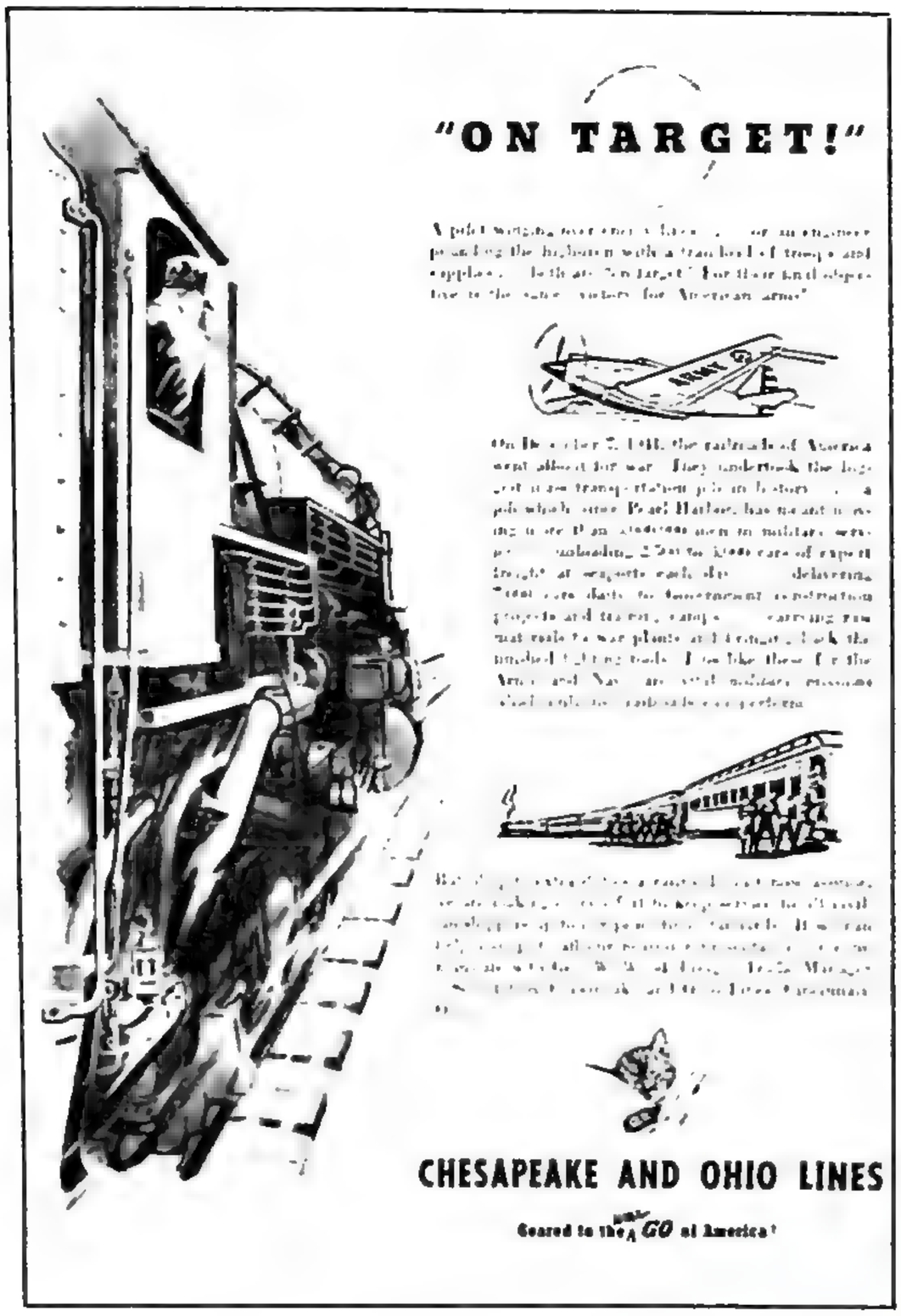


Figure 49 "On Target" from 1943

Wonder How the Kid's Doin'...

Wonder what that fightin' fool of a kid brother o' mine is doin'. Chuckin' hand grenades into Jap foxholes?

"I getcha, Chief—pick up three on the head-end of number five track!"

Maybe the Kid's a sergeant already. Be just like 'im. Certainly was a lucky stiff in football, but—

"Hiya, Hogger! Takin' out an extra again? What dya use for sleep?"

Them flats full o' antiaircraft guns we kicked over the hump last night—wouldn't it be sumpn' if they ended up where the Kid's at . . . keepin' the Zeros off 'im? Gee, what I'd only give t' hear the Kid's voice again . . . an' tell 'im we're pushin' it out to 'im! . . . No hero stuff back here on the railroad, *but*—

"Hey, Joe! How long's that damn blue flag gonna stay there? We need track eight!"

Yeah, Kid, we're pushin' it out. Fifty-two hundred cars outa the yard yesterday—and that ain't hay. Work? You said it! But it don't seem like just *work* no more. It's our kinda fightin'. You give it to 'em your way, Kid . . . an' we railroaders will back you up!

CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO LINES

ONE OF AMERICA'S RAILROADS—

All Mobilized for War

AVOID UNNECESSARY TRAVEL . . . BUY WAR BONDS INSTEAD!

Figure 50 "Wonder How the Kid's Doin'" from 1943 timetable

CHAPTER 4

THE KITTEN OF DESTINY

Figure 51 Robert R. Young, C&O's mercurial chairman from 1942-53 who involved the C&O in a great decade of expansion, innovation and invention.

In 1947 the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway embarked on a program of improvements, innovations, and experimentation like no other railroad in any era before or since. Under the personal leadership of Robert R. Young **(Figure 51)**, C&O's mercurial and visionary chairman of the board, the railroad was moving ahead on all fronts to capture as much of the postwar boom traffic as possible. Young's main thrust, and the most public manifestation of his new drive, was the improvement of C&O's passenger service that resulted in the advertisements that have become legend in the public relations world.

The greatest and most famous of these was that one with the slogan "A hog can cross the country but you can't." No through transcontinental passenger trains existed, but a hog in a stock car could travel from coast to coast without changing cars except for feeding and watering. This ad was created by the Kenyon and Eckhart Agency, which Young had hired to do C&O publicity work, and stemmed from Young's testimony in the Pullman monopoly case.

In 1946 Young had hired Thomas J. Deegan Jr. **(Figure 52)**, a publicist for American Airlines, as director of public relations. A man of great talent and creativity, Deegan later was promoted to vice president of public relations, advertising, and passenger services; and still later was named a C&O director. He also served as president of the Federation for Railway Progress (an upstart competitor to the Association of American Railroads), went with Young from C&O to the New York Central Railroad as his chief of staff and, from 1959-71, was chairman of the New York World's Fair Corporation, which organized and staged the highly successful New York World's Fair of 1964-65.

One of Young's pet projects was the introduction of a new super-luxury coach train between Washington and Cincinnati, to be called, of course, *The Chessie*. The rear marker (called a "drumhead" in railroad terms) for the train would be a portrait of Chessie in her usual pose **(Figure 53)**. It would have cars of the most modern design, including dome coaches, cabin cars with private rooms, luxurious coaches with leg-rest reclining seats, superior diners, and lounges, as well as family cars with children's theaters and facilities to assist the traveling mother.

The trains were to be hauled by three streamlined, coal-burning, steam-turbine-electric locomotives, which were Young's answer to the advocates of diesel-electric locomotives. He wanted the C&O, and other railroads as much as possible, to continue their use of coal as a fuel for motive power because of C&O's great dependence on coal as a traffic base. So, of course, the 1947 calendar **(Figure 54)** showed a lot of Young influence.

The scene is the family living room at Christmas with the traditional electric train around the tree. Sitting on the side are the usual steam locomotive and heavyweight Pullman cars; and on the track is *The Chessie* with its sleek turbine locomotive and lightweight Budd Company-built stainless steel cars. Chessie herself rests in her usual pose on a pillow tucked under a tiny sheet while the two kittens run the train. Nearby text extols the virtues of The Chessie and concludes with this line: "Truly, 1947 will be heralded as the year in which the Chesapeake and Ohio ushered in a new day in train travel." The ad appearing in the nationally circulated magazines said, "In 1947, this dream of a train won't be merely a dream. It will actually be rolling in Chesapeake and Ohio service." But this was not to happen.

Figure 52 Robert Young walks with the Duchess of Windsor, while Thomas Deegan walks with the Duke after they've detrained at White Sulphur Springs for one of their frequent stays at the Greenbrier about 1947.

The calendar that year was more popular than ever; and by January 1947, more than 250,000 had been sent out from Cleveland. An article in the January 1947 issue of *Tracks* (which had replaced *The Rail* as C&O's employees' magazine) explained how the large number of calendars was distributed. First, each employee of the C&O got one, the next priority went to getting them into the hands of traffic representatives so customers could be supplied, then to all the ticket agents that routed passengers via C&O, and finally to all the folks who wrote in requesting one.

The C&O calendar ads appeared on full pages in the December issues of *Time* and *Newsweek*. As a result of these came the usual "fan mail." Teachers wanted them for classrooms; an executive said he needed them to keep his employees working; a child sent Chessie some catnip, and so on, much as in the earlier years.

Also in January 1947, the C&O staged a "one-cat art show" on the 32nd floor of its company headquarters in Terminal Tower in Cleveland, featuring all the calendars since 1934 and a background story on Chessie **(Figures 55-56)**. This was handled in a photographic display area where other photos of interest from the C&O, Nickel Plate, and Pere Marquette railroads were shown. (All three rail lines were under a centralized management at that time.)

The 1948 calendar **(Figure 57)** again played up *The Chessie* streamliner. Passenger cars ordered from the Budd Company for the luxury train hadn't been delivered as expected, so C&O was still waiting to put them in service that year. The turbine-powered locomotives did arrive in December 1947 and were put into test service on main-line passenger trains, so part of the dream expressed in the 1947 calendar had been realized.

The 1948 rendition showed Chessie contentedly asleep in a Pullman roomette with Peake and kittens awake and looking out the window. As they see the turbine locomotive with The Chessie flashing by, Peake is saying, "Here comes your train, Chessie." The accompanying calendar text praised the new train and its design, comforts and styling. As usual, the Dec. 1, 1947, issues of *Time* and *Newsweek* carried full color ads for the calendar. A news story on the 1948 version said the press run of 275,000 for 1947 had been exhausted too early and that 425,000 had been printed for the new year.

Since this was the 15th anniversary issue, C&O published a small pamphlet in full color showing each calendar for those 15 years with background material on Chessie. This neatly done booklet is highly prized among railroadiana collectors today, as are calendars from those years, which, in good condition, often bring prices ranging from $100 to $500!

The closing paragraph of the text on the 1948 calendar read, "These are the trains all America has waited for! You'll be welcome aboard in 1948 — a momentous year for railroad leadership — and Chessie!" The words would seem ironic a year later. The year 1948 was indeed momentous for C&O, but not in the way expected. A widespread coal miners' strike that year diminished revenues, as it would again in 1949, causing the "solid gold C&O" to experience its first financial troubles since 1888. The Budd-built cars for *The Chessie* arrived on the property and were run all over the system in demonstration shows. But the train never was installed into actual daily service because of a decline in passenger revenues. The cars were used on regular trains and all but four were sold to other railroads in 1950-51.

The rail passenger market, which had remained fairly strong in the postwar days, began to decline markedly due to competition from other modes of transportation. C&O was forced to eliminate the regular second sections of its main-line name trains, which had run since the second year of World War II to accommodate the great increase in business. The three steam-turbine locomotives continued to operate on main-line train assignments but proved to have so many problems that they were taken out of service at the end of 1948 and went to scrap in 1950.

The sunny days of C&O passenger service seemed to be a little clouded in 1948 and in the following years. But confidence in the future not only for passenger business but for all aspects of railroading remained high.

Figure 53 The Dome–Lounge–Observation car that was intended for *The Chessie,* Robert Young's dream train for daylight service on the C&O between Cincinnati and Washington. Note the Chessie portrait drumhead and the lettering.

Chairman Robert R. Young continued his drumbeat to convince the railroad industry's ultra-conservative management to institute the forward-looking research, development and experimentation that C&O was performing in order to retain the industry's preeminent position in American transportation. This position Young saw fast being eroded by airlines, buses, trucks, automobiles, and good roads getting better all the time at taxpayer expense.

Thomas J. Deegan Jr., Young's new director of public relations and advertising expanded the interest in Chessie by introducing "Chessie merchandise." He developed a woman's silk scarf **(Figure 58)** covered with Chessies and later pushed the line into children's sleepwear through "flannelette" and broadcloth materials. The latter featured Chessie with her name on her coverings, interspersed with rosebuds to make a very attractive material. It was introduced by Ameritex, one of the then leading national manufacturers of fabrics. Other designs were soon on the market, as well as those offering Peake and the kittens in a "family portrait" surrounded by old-fashioned picture frames.

A child's engineer suit was readied for Christmas and stuffed toy manufacturer "Miss Clare" did a wonderful music-box Chessie. A Chessie necktie, the first of many editions over the years, was designed. The merchandise was top quality. No royalty was sought because the idea was only to broaden fame through new outlets, not to make money. Careful licensing and quality control was observed, however, in order to assure full credit to C&O.

The Chessie merchandise market rapidly expanded in the years to come. Howard Skidmore, C&O's top PR man in the 1950s-1970s, said:

> After Deegan left, the merchandise program continued to grow. A major benefit was that it

Figure 54 1947 calendar

produced items that made attractive modest-priced gifts for major C&O customers. Where before the company's salesmen had only a pack of Chessie cards to give, they now could make judicious distribution of neckties, scarves, a child's toy, even a simulated engineer's oil can to use as a cocktail shaker or plant watering can. Among editors and reporters important to C&O, the PR yearly Christmas gift of a Chessie item became famous. A Pulitzer Prize-winning editor of the Wall Street Journal sent a photo of himself and his wife in their red-and-white Chessie pajamas and nightcaps. Malcolm Forbes in his column in the magazine hailed Chessie's annual remembrance for creating family fun around the Christmas tree.

S. D. Lee, who had started as my PR secretary, showed creativity and ingenuity in the merchandise program. He worked with George McCann, Asst. VP for Corp. Comm., who, with Joe Singer, had brought other Chessie item ideas to fruition. One of these was the engineer's oil can/watering can that DeWitt Wallace, one of the nation's richest men because of the success of Reader's Digest, liked so much. His letter thanked Chessie for a gift with her likeness on it that had cost only a few dollars.

By the late 1960s and mid-1970s, with the growing railfan interest, Chessie appeared on all sorts of merchandise, garments and souvenirs, including caps, scarves, T-shirts, compote glasses, keyrings, handkerchiefs, tie-tacks, prints, mugs, drinking glasses, knives, and a hundred other items. Sears, Roebuck and Company produced a line of Chessie blankets, bedspreads and matching curtains for children's rooms in the 1960s.

Figures 55–56 A Chessie art show was held in C&O headquarters on the 32nd floor of the Terminal Tower in Cleveland in 1947 to advertise Chessie and to show her heritage in art.

JANUARY 1948
SUN MON TUE WED THU FRI SAT
1 2 3
4 5 6 7 8 9 10
11 12 13 14 15 16 17
18 19 20 21 22 23 24
25 26 27 28 29 30 31
DECEMBER 1947
FEBRUARY 1948
CHESAPEAKE AND OHIO RAILWAY

Figure 57 1948 calendar

The original double decks of playing cards, believed to have been first introduced in 1938 with Chessie on one deck and Peake on the other, were sold for 50 cents in dining cars and lounges on all C&O passenger trains. Of all the Chessie merchandise, they are the longest lasting and have been reprinted scores of times.

The 1949 calendar **(Figure 32)** features a C&O Train Hostess (one of the innovations of the Robert R. Young passenger push) sitting on a "Sleepy Hollow" reclining coach seat in one of the new Budd-built *Chessie* cars. She is tucking Chessie in under her pillow and sheet as the two kittens, wide awake, frolic under the seat. The caption "Where There's Chessie...There's Comfort" appeared under the painting. Each of the tear-off month calendars has an artist's color drawing of a steam-turbine-electric locomotive pulling a *Chessie* train somewhere on the C&O system, even though by that time *The Chessie's* cars had been scattered to various premier C&O trains. (Later in 1949, these new cars would go to work en masse on the Northern Region — as the recently merged Pere Marquette Railway in Michigan was then called — between Grand Rapids and Chicago.) Once again, 425,000 copies of the calendar were published and distributed.

The Chicago Railroad Fair of 1948 and 1949 was the last great extravaganza of American Railroading. The C&O was there with a steam-turbine-electric locomotive on exhibit, as well as a new 2-6-6-2 compound Mallet reciprocating steamer, just to prove that coal wasn't dead as a locomotive fuel. In addition, a Budd-built car named "The Chessie Club" **(Figure 59)** served railroad-style meals to the public. Almost everyone who visited the fair that year stopped by this car to look around, even if not to eat. The car was Tom Deegan's idea and was used extensively by important C&O customers. Just like the famous Greenbrier Hotel, here was a C&O "advertisement" that customers were happy to patronize at their own expense. A real Chessie look-alike cat and pair of kittens came to the Railroad Fair for Children's Day and were a great hit.

Late in 1949 Chessie merchandise began to proliferate with notepads, nightgowns and many other items, and C&O was enjoying even more publicity while making a little money from the royalties as well. Chessie was still paying her way.

Figure 58 Chessie ladies' silk scarf, first in the long line of "Chessie merchandise"

Figure 59 C&O Chairman Robert Young, left, C&O President Walter Tuohy, right, and others stand on the portico of "The Chessie Club," the C&O's popular dining car exhibit at the 1948-49 Chicago Railroad Fair.

After years of innovative art, the 1950 calendar **(Figure 60)** brought back Chessie in her original 1934 pose. Under the etching was a scene of a C&O steam locomotive passing a string of C&O coal hoppers, all displaying the brand-new "C&O for Progress" herald.

Each month's tear-off calendar page had a small line drawing of a C&O scene, including a depiction of the new *Train X* demonstration car being produced by Pullman-Standard. This car was intended to be the prototype for Chairman Young's idea for a new-technology, ultra-lightweight train with a low center of gravity derived from Spain's then-new *Talgo* train and developed by C&O's Research Department under K.A. Browne. The train would reach very high speeds even on old rights-of-way with sharp curves.

Also in 1950 the first children's T-shirts with Chessie and the kittens went on sale.

Chessie's own story was told anew in a book titled *Cats of Destiny* by Fairfax Downey and Paul Brown, published by Charles Scribner's Sons. And Chessie got another honor in 1951 when the New York Empire Cat Club gave C&O its "All-Time Champion Purr" award for the railway's use of Chessie in its ads since 1934.

The 1951 calendar **(Figure 61)** was a departure from the usual rendering of Chessie as the central theme. It featured a watercolor of a West Virginia mountain town as the centerpiece, with the sleeping Chessie superimposed as part of the frame around it. The watercolor was one of a series of paintings done by 10 of the top-rated artists of the day including Robert Young's famous sister-in-law, Georgia O'Keefe. The artists were taken by office car out on the railroad to search out their sites. These paintings were intended for display in the cars of the new *Chessie* train, but when it wasn't put into service they were used in C&O offices and reproduced as prints which were sold or given away to customers and patrons. The art also was widely used in annual reports and elsewhere, as well as on this calendar.

The 1952 calendar **(Figure 62)** showed up in rather drab colors and lacked some of the "pizzazz" of past years. It showed a Pullman porter tucking Chessie into her berth as C&O's famous resort hotel, The Greenbrier at White Sulphur Springs, W.Va., was seen out of the

Figure 60 1950 calendar

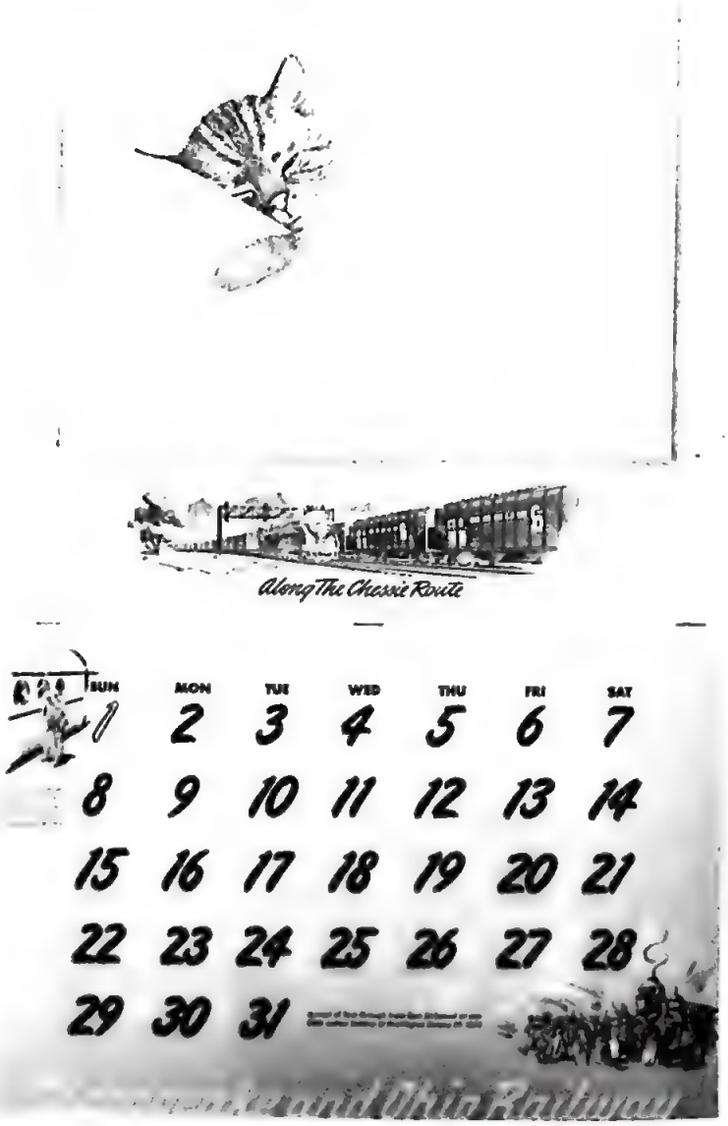


Figure 61 1951 calendar

Figure 62 1952 calendar

sleeper window. Each tear-off sheet had a line drawing of a C&O scene such as coal tipples and trains.

With Deegan's elevation to vice president and director (the only officer besides President Walter Tuohy who was on the board), his responsibilities broadened to include passenger traffic. He was also president of the Federation of Railway Progress, an organization which Young established as a competitor to the Association of American Railroads as the industry spokesman. Deegan also was a member of the executive committee of The Greenbrier Hotel. C&O's commitment to passenger service was re-invigorated even in the face of declining revenues. (This was the real beginning of the "passenger problem" that would plague railroads all the way to the advent of Amtrak in 1971.)

Coal miners' strikes in the late 1940s curtailed revenues and forced cutbacks. Deegan would have wanted much larger advertising budgets, according to his successor Howard Skidmore, but the cash squeeze just wouldn't allow it. The giant 351-car order for new passenger train equipment, which C&O placed in 1946, was scaled back to only 99 cars by the time they were delivered in 1950. By then much branch line passenger service had been eliminated and main-line trains were being consolidated wherever and whenever possible to cut costs.

Figure 63 1954 calendar

In 1951 the venerable "George Washington" china service that had been in use on C&O dining cars since 1932 (and today is acclaimed as the most elegant railroad dining car china) was replaced by a new, simpler, sturdier service that was decorated with a tastefully small portrait of Chessie on the rim. Thus was created another dining car service that would attain almost mythic proportions in the 1970s and 1980s among collectors.

The C&O's passengers slept like kittens, looked at Chessie calendars, wore Chessie scarves and handkerchiefs, set Chessie ashtrays on their coffee tables, drank from Chessie glasses, played with Chessie cards, wrote to each other on Chessie notepaper, and now ate from Chessie china. No wonder almost everyone called the C&O Railway "Chessie" for short. The two simply were not separable!

Whether or not people rode C&O's trains, they still liked Chessie and the calendars were still popular. Distribution was about 250,000 a year in the early 1950s, down considerably from the boom days of 1948-49. But things looked better in 1952 for calendar art when New York artist Jerome Rosen completed a fine illustration showing a golden-haired little girl fast asleep on a C&O coach seat clutching prints of Chessie as she "Sleeps Like a Kitten." This 1953 calendar was another inspired piece of work worthy of the tradition of the Thirties and Forties **(Figure 33)**. The girl, it turns out, was Deegan's inspiration. His third child, Deirdre, had just died of leukemia. He worked directly with the artist on the calendar and when it was finished the result was a real tribute to Deegan's lost daughter.

In 1954, Chessie celebrated her 21st birthday. To commemorate the event, the calendar for that year showed Chessie in her original pose in the center of a montage picturing many earlier calendar illustrations **(Figure 63)**. A special Chessie cake was distributed by the C&O Public Relations Department to numerous press, radio, and television journalists; and a display of Chessie merchandise and memorabilia was presented at the Public Relations Society of America's annual convention in Detroit that year.

Also in 1954, the 1950-built five-double-bedroom/buffet/lounge car named "Chessie Club" **(Figure 64)** became a regular diner for coach passengers on *The George Washington*, serving drinks and light meals each evening until midnight. In the merchandise line, more infantwear, a Chessie doll, and overcoats with Chessie linings for kids all appeared in stores.

The 1955 calendar **(Figure 65)** shows a little girl tucking her kitten in, "just like Chessie," as the portrait of C&O's famous feline hangs on the wall behind her. It was an attractive painting, but certainly not on a par with earlier issues. Not much was made of this calendar in the public print, either, with C&O's own *Tracks* magazine carrying only a brief one-paragraph story and photo on the inside of the January issue. The distribution level, however, still was said to be at a quarter-million according to Chessie's long-time guardian, Walter Jackson of C&O's Advertising Department.

The 1956 issue **(Figure 37)** was another passenger-oriented classic showing a little girl opening the door to her parents' bedroom on a C&O lightweight Pullman and putting her finger to her lips as the conductor asks for her tickets. That's because Chessie is in the background, sleeping in the lower berth. The painting was done by Cleveland artist Floyd Chaney. Jackson told *Tracks* that the reaction to this 23rd year of the calendar was unusually good and he expected to distribute the usual 250,000 easily.

One of Chessie's "fan letters" for 1956 read: "My daughter, now 21, has had a [Chessie] calendar ever since she was born. A framed picture of Chessie was in her college room. Now at Indiana for graduate work, she still wants one." Another said, "Your calendars, like the Chesapeake & Ohio, are wonderful. I've traveled on your trains and they are so wonderful in every way, all the way."

Figure 64 "Chessie Club" was one of the new streamlined lightweight cars received by the C&O in 1950. It saw service until Amtrak's takeover of passenger trains in 1971 and operated in that service for almost a decade. Today it's been restored to this appearance and runs in excursion trains.

Also in 1956 University of Virginia history professor Charles Turner wrote his full-length history of the C&O. For a title, what could have been more appropriate than *Chessie's Road!*

For the 1957 calendar **(Figure 66)**, a little boy wearing a striped engineer's cap cradles Chessie in a wicker basket, with a model F-7 diesel in C&O colors and a train of C&O box and hopper cars on the living room floor behind him. The theme is that Chessie has, at age 24, become a "second generation railroader" because many people requesting the 250,000 calendar copies mentioned growing up with Chessie — and now they wanted their children to know her. One said, "Our children were brought up with Chessie calendars and it will be a pleasure to have our grandchildren meet Chessie." (It's also noteworthy that the 1957 theme emphasizes freight rather than making any suggestion of passenger service.)

In 1957 the C&O tried an experimental paint scheme for box cars that incorporated Chessie on rolling stock for the first time. Six cars were all given different versions of Chessie and flashy paint. But the idea wasn't accepted and Chessie didn't appear on railroad equipment again until the inauguration of Chessie System in 1972. (See **Figures 68-70** for photos of three of these cars.)

The 1958 version **(Figure 67)** carried on the children-and-Chessie tradition as we see a pig-tailed little girl tucking in Chessie while the kittens play around her. She holds a small package behind her back marked "Chessie."

After straying from the passenger theme for a couple of years, the 1959 calendar **(Figure 34)** comes back to the C&O coach seat as a little girl in a lace dress sits primly on a chair cuddling the sleeping Chessie at her side. Outside the coach window, we see the Greenbrier Hotel. But that's the last year we see Chessie in a purely passenger context.

By 1960 the "passenger problem" had become a monstrous debt that was eating at the viability of the railroad industry. The interstate highway system was getting under way and routine jet airliner transportation was only a short time in the future. Buses were filled to capacity and people were driving their cars everywhere. Rail passenger service seemed doomed and railroads were doing all they could to trim costs and cut service at the same time.

C&O joined in this effort and it always tried to maintain the service it gave at the highest quality standards, in the tradition of Chessie. The railway allowed its patrons to "Sleep Like a Kitten" to the end, even as the great name trains fell away, after 1968 leaving only *The George Washington* to ply C&O rails until the Amtrak takeover on May 1, 1971 **(Figures 71-73)**.

The 1960 calendar showed Chessie in her original pose and was spiral bound so that each two-month calendar page featured a different view of her, the kittens, and Peake. A similar production technique followed for the next few years with watercolors and other paintings and drawings of mostly freight-oriented C&O scenes adorning the calendar pages. Thus,

Figure 65 1955 calendar

Figure 66 1957 calendar

Chessie herself really appeared only during the first one or two months and was replaced by scenes of railroad operations for the rest of the year.

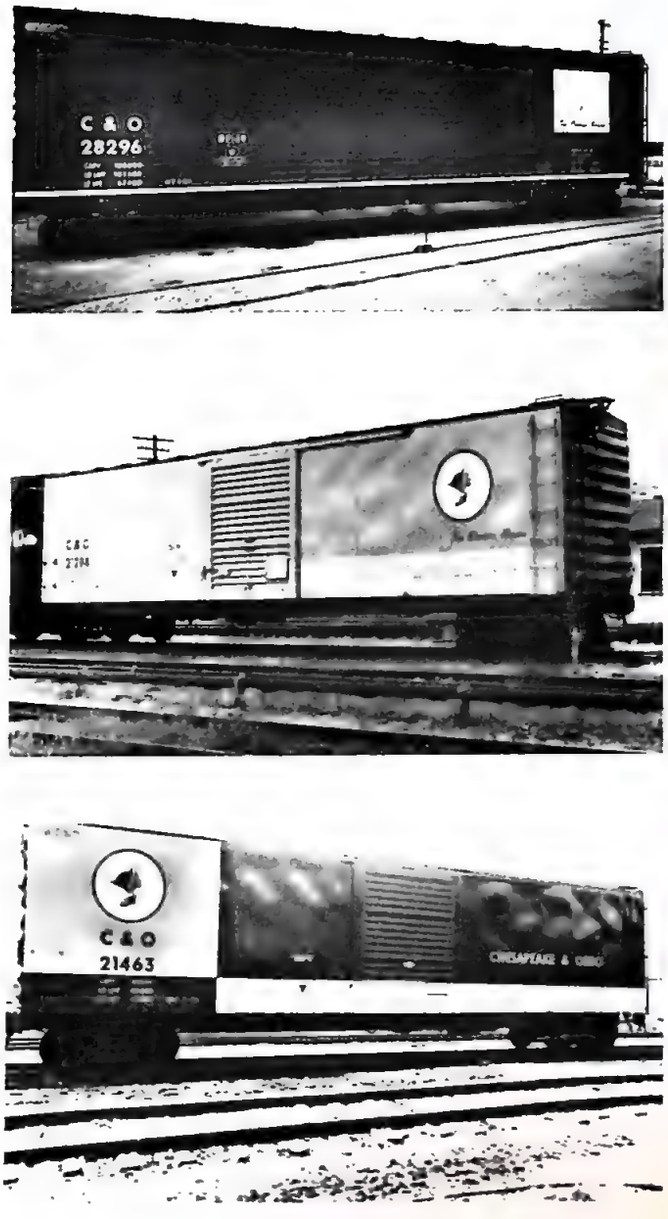
Also noticeable was that, more and more, the "Sleep Like a Kitten" slogan was downplayed and Chessie was put to work advertising the "Purr-fect Transportation" of the C&O, especially in the new "damage-free" and "cushion underframe" box cars. Now the company was giving freight the same treatment that had been given passengers for many years. The latter were lost, never to be regained, but perhaps most of the freight could be held by the right kind of treatment. At least Chessie was to give it a try!

In the 1960s Chessie became more commercialized as her image was licensed out to a variety of companies and she appeared on all kinds of merchandise. Railroad hobbyists, or railfans, became a potent force in America's 1960s turn to nostalgia for some stability. (This was just at the time the railroad industry fell more into overall decline, even though the C&O and its merger partners continued to buck this trend and stay on top as one of America's most profitable railroad systems.) The market for Chessie memorabilia doubled every year, it seemed.

Chessie the cat remained the most recognizable railroad emblem in a country that had all but forgotten what railroads were. A new generation of children began to grow up in that era who had never ridden a train and knew little about railroads. But they did often know about Chessie...even if they didn't know she once slept in "Lower 9" on a passenger train called *The George Washington,* or once lounged in a coach on *The Sportsman,* or *The Fast Flying Virginian,* or once advertised a fabulous train named for her that never turned a wheel in revenue service! This was a new age, a new mentality, a new era of transportation, and Chessie as a symbol adapted to it.

In 1963 C&O acquired a controlling interest in the venerable Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. During the next decade C&O instituted a gradual integration of the two systems. Soon after the "affiliation" of the two lines (they never legally were "merged" until just be-

Figure 67 1958 calendar



Figures 68-70

fore both companies ceased to exist in 1987) and the consolidation of supervisory functions in both Cleveland and Baltimore offices, Howard Skidmore, C&O's Vice President of Public Relations and Passenger Traffic, pointed out that a common marketing name was needed.

Major competitor Norfolk & Western had completely submerged the railroads that it had recently acquired, whereas C&O and B&O both had kept their identities until then. Management said at the time of this 1965 study that emphasis was to be placed on single-system service like that of the N&W and its recently absorbed Virginian, Nickel Plate and Wabash lines.

As part of the effort, 256 C&O and B&O directors and officers responded to a questionnaire survey. Shippers and customers were consulted in an effort to determine what should be the "best" approach. The final recommendation was that Chessie should be adopted as the name of the newly affiliated lines, dropping the B&O Capitol Dome and C&O "For Progress" symbols and the combined C&O/B&O name, which implied disunity and not a single-system service.

It's interesting to note that little or nothing is mentioned in this study about passengers and the impact of the name on them. Passenger service had by then faded into the twilight of railroading and railroad management thinking.[4] The recommended name of "Chessie System" was to encompass the two railroads, but the two lines would keep their legal corporate identities. The Chessie name would be used in all promotion and advertising. Some reasons given for choosing the name were as follows:

★ The sleeping kitten was widely known and loved by all classes of people.

Figure 71 A 1955 timetable used a new style that featured Chessie prominently, whereas she had been downplayed on covers after 1947.

Figure 72 This 1957 cover is a later manifestation of Chessie on perhaps the most visible item for passengers, the public timetable.

Figure 73 This 1965 timetable shows Chessie the last time she appeared on a cover. Thereafter, she appeared only in very small logos inside the remaining public train schedules until Amtrak took over in 1971.

- ★ Chessie symbolized care and this was easily adaptable to freight being handled "with care like a sleeping kitten."
- ★ It would be a mistake to give up a winning and widely loved corporate symbol.
- ★ "Chessie" was simple and followed through with the name in identifying the company.
- ★ Her simple "soft sell" in the day of the "hard sell" slogan conveyed a personal approach to the huge, bustling railroad industry.
- ★ The name is different from any other railroad. "When you tell people you're with the C&O, they automatically mention Chessie."
- ★ The word Chessie is taken from the Chesapeake Bay, on which both Baltimore (B&O) and Newport News (C&O) are located.
- ★ Chessie counteracts the impression of a vast, impersonal corporation.
- ★ C&O already was referred to in common parlance in stock exchanges, on railroad lines and among railroaders themselves as "the Chessie."
- ★ With eventual merger of C&O and B&O and adoption of a new formal name, the word "Chesapeake" could be retained in the title and "Chessie" still used informally as it had been for so many years.

The report's conclusion rejected a combination of the C&O/B&O initials and the "For Progress" and Capitol Dome emblems conjoined because of a lack of unity. In addition, neither of the two logos was known widely outside railroad circles.

Creation of an entirely new symbol also was rejected because of the tremendous publicity campaign that would have to accompany it. One drawback of the Chessie symbol was the fact that it didn't suggest aggressiveness or mobility. One of the report's concluding paragraphs says:

> While the Chessie symbol itself must always be shown in the traditional pose, forceful animation can be associated with it. The Chessie kittens, or other felines pictorially suggestive of competitive spirit and a lithe and muscular transportation service, can be used.

The report was tendered to management on June 30, 1965. But the time wasn't "ripe" for implementation, according to Howard Skidmore, recalling the study in 1988. The two railroads' traffic solicitation forces were still separate, which was part of an agreement with the Interstate Commerce Commission. Instead, the C&O/B&O initials and the combined logos were used (**Figure 74**). C&O locomotives and cars kept the "For Progress" emblem and B&O locomotives and cars kept the Capitol Dome. Stationery and ads had both emblems and the "slashed" initials.

Chessie's two other cats deserve mention here. During the C&O/B&O affiliation talks and implementation of the early 1960s, "Bessie" the B&O cat made several appearances in company publications but didn't last long. The other much more elusive and un-

Figure 74 The C&O/B&O emblem decided on after the 1965 study.

known feline was "Newton," the completely unofficial Norfolk & Western Railway cat, whose drawings made the rounds of C&O/B&O (and maybe N&W) offices during their merger negotiations of the late 1960s. Caricatures of this "Fig Newton" of someone's imagination seem to have vanished.

Not until 1972 was the Chessie name revived as a possible name for the entire corporation, after the marketing and many other departments had been integrated. Howard Skidmore, by that time C&O/B&O's vice president of public relations and advertising and author of the 1965 report, was approached about this subject on May 24, 1972, by James B. McCahey, C&O/B&O's vice president of merchandise traffic. McCahey wanted to know how his sales force could get behind a better name for the railroad and asked Skidmore, "Can't we implement your proposal for Chessie System?" Skidmore relates the rest of the story:

> With Jim now for it, and the time now ripe, we sure could try....
>
> On August 15 [1972], three months after McCahey's request, Hays [Watkins, then C&O/B&O President] had me standing before a staff meeting [in the board room on the 35th floor of Terminal Tower high above Cleveland]. On an easel were the exhibits that Franklyn Carr [the creative design chief] had prepared for me. The officers were interested but didn't say much: After all, Hays was probably for it or he wouldn't have me standing there. And Jim McCahey wanted it. George Sandmann, vice president of coal traffic and development, who had worked for C&O since he wore short pants, pointed to the Ches-C and said, 'You should have invented that years ago.' After the meeting, Hays asked me to draft a letter for him to the directors explaining the new corporate identity — it was approved!
>
> Franklyn and I had been working for months on a new loco dress. The blue engines couldn't be seen at crossings, and Ed Hudgins, claims, and Bill Howes, casualty prevention, wanted something bolder and brighter. So did Ken Reed, operations VP, and Bill Dadd, mechanical. We were working toward a bright locomotive with a big C&O/B&O. But when the Chessie System name was approved, we knew we had a winner.[5]
>
> For years I had admired how the big, blocky "Santa Fe" stood out on its locos. (I later told Bill Burk, my Santa Fe counterpart, that we had cribbed a good idea.) George McCann [assistant vice president for corporate communications] had found a typeface named Melior we were using in our printed matter. Franklyn would make adjustments in it for the engines. But how about Chessie? Two bright young design men from New York were trying to sell their services to us. When they said forget Chessie, I forgot them.
>
> Franklyn said, "How about using Chessie as the dot on the 'i'?" I said no, because something was eating at the edge of my mind. "Chessie's head is roughly round," I said. Could you mate that with the C in Chessie?"
>
> The next day Franklyn was back. He gave me a mock-up where the Chessie outline was outside the C. Awful! Franklyn was smiling a Cheshire smile as he produced the C with the cat silhouette in the center **(Figure 75)**.

Figure 75 Franklyn Carr's "Ches-C" logo for the new Chessie System.

> After Franklyn left, I took out of my desk a glossy print of Chessie's head inside a bold circle, a standard form used frequently. With scissors, I cut around the cat's head and made an opening on the right. Here it was — the Ches-C. The name just came into being with the thing itself.
>
> Just as the Ches-C came out of tradition, so did the name Chessie System **(Figure 76)**. I had seen a 1930s ad, probably after the Hocking Valley merger, that referred to C&O's passenger service as the Chessie System. So, L. C.

Figure 76 The full Chessie System logo.

Probert's creative genius blossomed again across the generations.

The Chessie System paint scheme for locomotives and cars was introduced to the public and employees in the summer of 1972 in special ceremonies in Cleveland (C&O/B&O's corporate headquarters) and Huntington, W.Va., (the railroads' mechanical and operating headquarters) and in a special color issue of the employee newspaper *Chessie News*, that had succeeded *Tracks* magazine in 1958.

Each new bright yellow 4100-series GP40-2 locomotive **(Figures 77-78)** cost an estimated $800 more to paint than the previous scheme of blue with simple "C&O" or "B&O" letters. But the image was so striking and the kitten still so popular that Chessie System soon became the darling of railfan photographers and the general public. The introduction of this new logo and paint scheme for locomotives and cars **(Figures 79-80)** was a PR coup second only to the original introduction of Chessie herself nearly 40 years before.

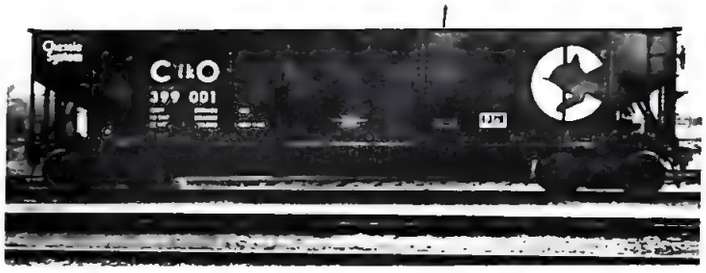
In 1974, the second year into the new Chessie System name/image/paint scheme, the production of calendars stopped after 30 years. Three reasons were cited: (1) Chessie had been issuing a pocket appointment calendar for customers for some years, (2) passenger traffic was no longer a reason for wide public identification and (3) Chessie System was constantly in the news. Thus, the need to publish a wall calendar was no longer felt. Amtrak had taken over virtually all railroad passenger business nationwide on May 1, 1971, and was operating a few trains over C&O and B&O lines, including *The George Washington*, whose name was even later changed to *The Cardinal*.

Dependence on fewer and bigger shippers was now the key to the railroad's future, it was then believed, and modern executives put their calendars in their coat pockets, not on their office walls.

Howard Skidmore tells us that, as head of Chessie's Public Relations and Advertising Department, he rejected the option of selling something that had been free for so long.

Chessie calendar production resumed four years later in 1978 under Milton B. Dolinger, Skidmore's successor as boss of Chessie's public relations and advertising functions. Dolinger convinced Chairman

Figures 77-78 These two photos show Chessie System logos as they were applied to the bright yellow locomotives. Truly a striking paint scheme.



Figures 79-80 Chessie System's emblems also adorned freight cars — a caboose and a hopper car being the two examples here.

Hays Watkins to let him offer the calendar to the public, employees, and stockholders "at cost." It was still given free in limited quantities to customers and has continued that way since CSX succeeded Chessie System.

Chessie has been the centerpiece of a calendar every year since then, including many fine reproductions of her older poses from the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, revived for another generation. (It is interesting to state here that press runs for Chessie calendars have been in the range of 20-25,000 in recent years, compared with 250-450,000 in the late 1940s when they were given away.)

NOTE: (In addition, the excellent creative work of Chessie (and now CSX Corporation) company photographer John B. Corns and artistic manager Judy Poplar in Cleveland produced several memorable calendars in the early 1980s featuring several live Chessie models. These kittens, adopted from a local home for homeless cats, were fed and housed in the 40th floor photography studio in Cleveland's renowned downtown Terminal Tower, amidst all the trappings of Van Sweringen furniture and offices with fireplaces.

Corns moved to Baltimore with CSX when Chessie railroad offices in Cleveland were effectively closed in 1986 after 56 years and continues to be deeply involved with one of the best calendars anywhere. Judy left Chessie to raise a family. And the kittens? They are now full-grown cats that were lovingly adopted by Chessie employees.)

Some of this "second generation" of Chessie calendars have even featured newly found original kitten etchings by Chessie's creator, Guido Gruenewald. In November 1956 Howard Skidmore was in New York for the annual Financial Writers Dinner and was walking on West 45th Street, when:

> I stopped in front of Friedman's, an art store. Framed in the window was a wide awake cat, an obvious sibling of Chessie. Someone in the past had paired it with what we know as Chessie, titling one 'Good Night' and the other 'Good Morning.' It turned out there were six other Gruenewald colored etchings, two cats in bed, a kitten peeking around a curtain, etc.
>
> We contacted the artist's daughter in Vienna and secured rights to use them all. You can see them in the 1978 Chessie calendar. Walter Tuohy (Chessie president at that time) didn't like the wide-awake cat — he said it looked weak, which it does — but he didn't say don't use it.

Prints of these etchings were issued several times from the 1960s through the early 1980s by the Public Relations & Advertising Department.

In 1977 and 1978 Chessie System ran a steam-powered commemorative train to mark the 150th anniversary of the founding of the B&O as America's first railroad. The ex-Reading 4-8-4 No. 2101 locomotive and its cars were decked out in yellow, with

Figure 81 The four Chessie PR men sharing a light-hearted moment here around a magnificent Van Sweringen table made significant contributions to Chessie's health and welfare for the 40-year period from the late 1940s until the present time. The photo, which was taken in 1977 on the 39th floor of Terminal Tower in downtown Cleveland, depicts, left to right with job titles as of that time, Franklyn J. Carr, Manager, Creative Services; Milton B. Dolinger, Assistant Vice President – Community and Media Relations; Howard F. Skidmore, Vice President – Public Relations and Advertising; and George F. McCann, Assistant Vice President – Corporate Communications.

Figure 82 Chessie System logos appeared prominently on a former Reading Railroad 4-8-4 type steam locomotive that was pressed into service for a series of excursion trains in 1977-78 to promote the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Baltimore & Ohio. The same train with a former C&O steam locomotive pulled excursionists and promoted safety throughout Chessie's railroad system during 1980-81.

Chessie proudly sleeping on the front pilot and in the Ches-C on the tender **(Figure 82)**. This train was the subject of the 1979 calendar.

Then on Nov. 1, 1980, Chessie System, Inc. — the company that was named for a cat!! — was merged with Seaboard Coast Line Industries, Inc., to form CSX Corporation. Chessie was formed from C&O, B&O, and Western Maryland railroads, and SCLI was an amalgam of the old Seaboard Air Line and Atlantic Coast Line railroads (which had merged in 1967 to become Seaboard Coast Line), Louisville & Nashville, Clinchfield, Georgia Railroad, Atlanta & West Point, and the Western Railway of Alabama.

The new "Seaboard System Railroad" and "Chessie System Railroads" existed together much as the C&O and B&O had at the outset of their marriage in 1963. But things being what they are, management began to look again for unity, single-system operations, a break from the past, bold new beginnings, etc. It started with the creation of CSX Corporation as a holding/parent company for both Chessie and Seaboard. CSX stood for "Chessie and Seaboard, plus the multiplication symbol meaning much more." The public relations department told us the companies would retain their identities and that CSX would never appear on equipment or in anything but ads and marketing and financial documents. But that wasn't to hold true.

The changing face of railroading in the mid-1980s forced a lot of rethinking and the C&O, B&O, WM, and Seaboard were combined on July 1, 1986, into CSX Transportation. At that time, a new rolling stock paint scheme of hard-to-see blue and gray was introduced **(Figure 83)**. Of course, this meant the official loss of the Chessie emblem and its 14-year-old vermilion, royal blue, and yellow paint scheme. Chessie now no longer appears on stationery, in brochures, or on the equipment; but she does still appear in the calendar and on a host of merchandise items produced on license from CSX Corporation, which is now headquartered in Richmond, Va. She's still the "official mascot" of CSX, but she's not its corporate symbol.

Chessie as the symbol of the old C&O, B&O, and WM lines could just as easily be the symbol of the old L&N and SCL lines, especially because the southern

Figure 83 CSX logo on the new paint scheme, *sans* Chessie, introduced in 1986.

portion of CSX's railroad system did not have a well-known symbol. Chessie has made the transition before and she can still do it. In fact, plans are underway to produce an entire catalog of old and new Chessie merchandise later in 1988, marketed through the new "Chessie Shoppe" gift store at the world-famous B&O Museum in Baltimore. The Museum itself was spun off from CSX Corporation in December 1987 and is now an independent, non-profit corporation.

Maybe in the next few years we'll see a revival of the Chessie symbol for the entire CSX Corporation, which now includes world-traveling steamships, river barges, tugboats, trucks, trains, pipelines, and resorts! And especially the latter, considering CSX's new efforts directed toward building, purchasing, and operating many resort properties in addition to The Greenbrier. What better way to promote sleeping and relaxing at famous spas could there be than to reintroduce Chessie and encourage her guests to "Sleep Like a Kitten," this time all over the world! Such a move certainly would be in CSX's best interests. As former C&O/Chessie and current CSX Corporation Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Hays T. Watkins said during the CSX Transportation restructuring of 1986, "Chessie's not dead. She's only in her fifth of nine lives!"

Chessie is still around and she's still as potent a symbol as ever of the peaceful, restful, and quaint things in life. In fact, she still receives birthday cards addressed to her at Terminal Tower in Cleveland every September 1, which, because of the first publication of her likeness in the September 1933 *Fortune* magazine, was long ago established as her birthday.

Let's face it: Chessie is an animal symbol that exudes "goodness." For 55 years, she has truly been a kitten of destiny and she's weathered many a storm with her railroad, its passengers, shippers, and managers. She has taken her place, certainly as the best-loved

and one of the best-known of all corporate symbols. An unlikely fate for the sleeping kitten in a Depression-era etching.

Furthermore, Chessie will go on as popular as ever, whether or not she appears on box car flanks or locomotive cabs. She has become an enduring institution.

C&O's extremely gifted passenger promoter Dick Probert died in 1937, just as the crest of popularity for Chessie was beginning to build. He probably never imagined what a long, eventful, and useful life she would live. But in her, his genius, along with that of those who followed him at C&O's Public Relations Department, lives on. She has given them all a measure of immortality.

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4 In June 1988, former C&O/B&O Director of Passenger Services William F. Howes Jr. (who retired at the end of 1987 as Vice President of Research and Development for CSX Transportation) recalled the following interesting history regarding the Chessie symbol and the promotion of C&O/B&O passenger traffic, 1963-71:

> During the first three years of C&O's control of B&O, the passenger traffic departments of the two roads maintained separate identities. About the only links between the two were three jointly issued timetables in 1963 and 1964 in which Chessie received scant mention, and then only in connection with C&O operations. Meanwhile, each road continued to publish its own timetables and handle its own passenger advertising. Although Chessie was prominently displayed on C&O promotional materials through 1965, she was not to be found in B&O timetables or advertising. A single and significant exception was the use in the Summer of 1965 of the name "Chessie" (*sans* the cat logo) by B&O's Director of Passenger Services Paul Reistrup to launch his experimental take-your-auto service. Although Chessie Take-Your-Auto operations did not survive beyond 1965, this was probably the first use of the name "Chessie" in the identification and promotion of a major service on the B&O.
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> Late in 1965, the C&O Passenger Department, which had heretofore reported to Howard Skidmore, was merged into Reistrup's organization which reported directly to C&O/B&O President Gregory S. Devine. The resulting consolidated department was headquartered in Baltimore. C&O/B&O passenger promotional activities during the remainder of the Reistrup era had a distinctly B&O tilt. Chessie's appearances were limited primarily to the promotion of the C&O Lake Michigan auto ferries and some dining car menus.
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> Paul Reistrup left the Passenger Department in early 1967 and David Watts succeeded him. In May of that year, Bill Howes became Assistant Director of Passenger Services and replaced Watts in 1969. Watts and Howes reintroduced the Chessie name and logo into C&O/B&O's passenger marketing and advertising. In October 1967, two dining cars were redecorated in a colonial tavern motif and placed in service on the B&O's flagship, the Washington–Chicago *Capitol Limited*. They were designated "Chessie Taverns," a name long associated with C&O's dining car service. The 1967 timetable showed Chessie in her familiar pose and proclaimed, "Chessie Loves Passengers."
>
> Over the next 3 1/2 years, the C&O/B&O Passenger Department used the Chessie logo and/or name to identify and promote a wide variety of new and innovative services. These included Chessie Blue and Yellow Day Fares, a demand-related pricing structure; Chessie Pass, offering unlimited travel for 28 days for $185; and Chessie Starlight Sleeper Service. The last of these was inaugurated on January 1, 1969, and returned Chessie to her historic role of promoting the railroad's sleeping car service. This time she helped make the transition from Pullman to C&O/B&O operation of the system's sleepers. C&O/B&O had decided to take advantage of the demise of the Pullman Company to repackage its sleeping car service to include complimentary meals and a greatly simplified fare structure. And it had chosen Chessie to bring the new service to the public's attention!
>
> Chessie's efforts on behalf of rail passenger service ended on May 1, 1971, when the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) assumed responsibility for C&O/–B&O's intercity trains. However, she continued to promote the Lake Michigan auto ferries until their sale to the Michigan-Wisconsin Transportation Company in 1984.

5 Bill Howes, former C&O/B&O Director of Passenger Services, Chessie Vice President of Casualty Prevention, and CSXT Vice President of Research and Development, also was deeply involved in development of the Ches-C logo and color scheme.

Concurrent with (and, it turned out, highly compatible with) Howard Skidmore's efforts to forge a common marketing name and readily identifiable public image for the affiliated lines, the Casualty

Prevention Department, in early 1972, initiated a project to enhance rail-highway grade crossing safety by increasing the visibility of C&O/B&O locomotives. Casualty Prevention Vice President Ed Hudgins assigned the task to Bill Howes. A recent study by the U.S. Department of Transportation had recommended using large blocks of contrasting colors in locomotive paint schemes and had endorsed red/white and blue/yellow combinations. C&O/B&O's predominantly blue engines with narrow yellow striping and lettering did not meet this criterion. Casualty Prevention's field studies confirmed the poor conspicuity of C&O/B&O locomotives. Ken Reed, Operations Vice President, and Bill Dadd, Chief Mechanical Officer–Locomotives, endorsed the project to find a more effective color scheme. In April 1972, the Mechanical Engineer's office in Huntington produced several drawings depicting dark blue locomotives with large blocks of yellow in the form of side and end panels and/or lettering. In one version, "Chessie" was spelled out in huge yellow letters. Although the Mechanical Department's designs met the project's objectives and DOT's recommendations, they fell short of the mark in terms of aesthetics. Bill Howes sought the help of Franklyn Carr, Public Relations' creative designer.

Sleep like a Kitten